

QUANTUM

SCIENCE FICTION & FANTASY REVIEW

Spring 1990

No. 36

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Michael
Bishop
*On Sturgeon's
More Than Human*

James
Morrow
*Interviewed by
Darrell Schweitzer*

Gene
Wolfe
On R. A. Lafferty

Ronald Anthony
Cross
SF vs. Fantasy

Poul
Anderson
Getting Ideas

Nancy
Etchemendy
Being on the Nebula Jury



Journey into a Universe of Slow Light

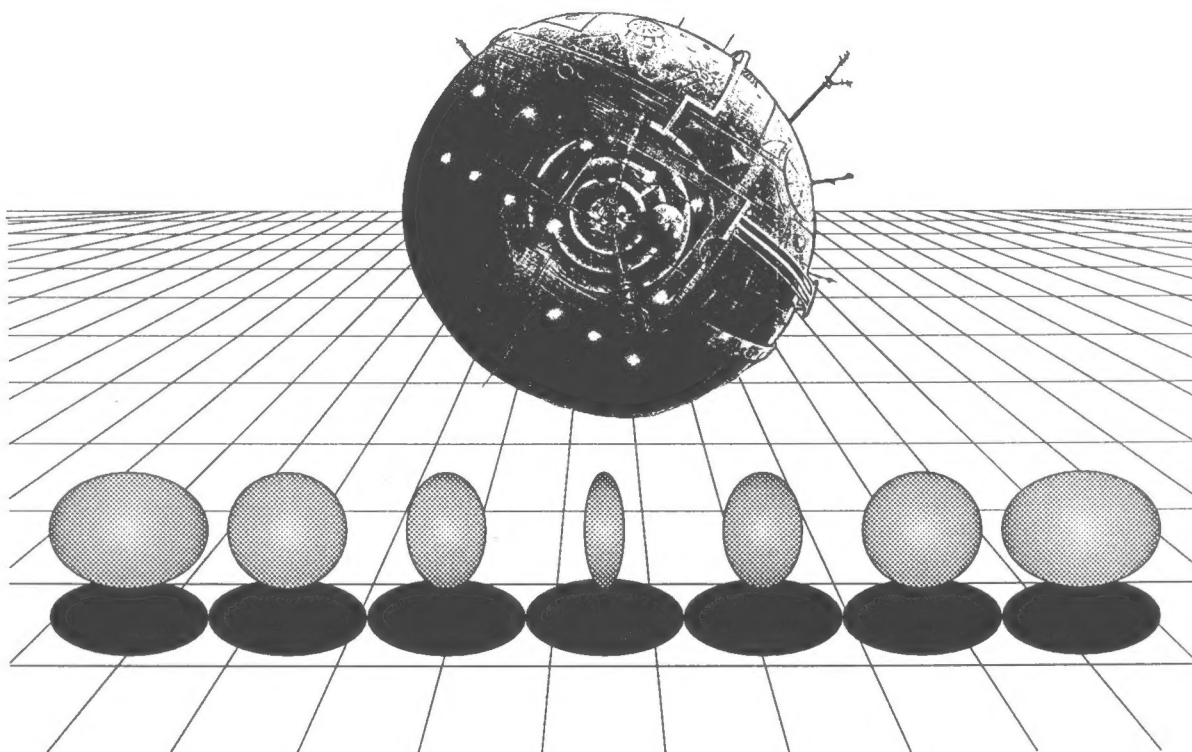
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QUANTUM

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No. 36 Spring 1990

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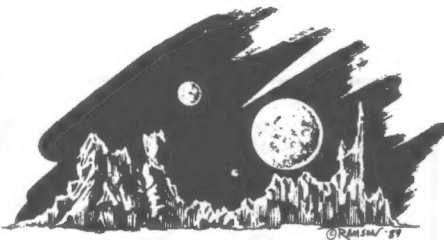
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IMPULSE



Doug Fratz

Welcome to *QUANTUM* 36, the first issue of this magazine to appear in the 1990s, and the first under our new title. *THRUST* is now only history.

After 18 years of publishing this magazine under the *THRUST* title, I'm going to miss it. But I certainly hope to be publishing *QUANTUM* for at least another 18 years.

The new *QUANTUM* logo was created by assistant editor Frank Elley on his Apple Macintosh. It is based on the same type style as the old *THRUST* logo—*Koloss*—which, incidentally, was selected by Dan Steffan way back in 1978 when he designed a new logo for the magazine. (This is the kind of thing that makes editors wax nostalgic...)

One other change that I decided to try this issue is sending the magazine to subscribers *sans* envelope. If you are a subscriber, please let me know how well your copy made it through the U.S. Postal Service's bulk-mail magazine mangling machines. If there are problems, I'll have to move to polyethylene bags, or back to envelopes.

The Issue At Hand: Our columnists this issue are represented by Michael Bishop and Poul Anderson. Mike takes a look back at Theodore Sturgeon's classic novel, **More Than Human**, and its effect on the SF world, and its later effect on a certain young 2nd lieutenant stationed in Denver. Poul revisits the age-old SF question: where do you get your ideas?

Our interview is with James Morrow, and is conducted by our own Darrell Schweitzer. Despite bringing his considera-

ble literary talents and distinctive voice to SF only a few short years ago, Morrow has begun to be recognized as a major talent for both his novels and short stories.

Even in a field that welcomes, embraces and supports quirky talents by the dozen, R. A. Lafferty stands out as one of the field's most difficult to classify geniuses. Gene Wolfe's article this issue, written as an introduction to a small-press edition of Lafferty's novel, **East of Laughter**, takes on the difficult task of describing just what it is that makes Lafferty one of the field's truly unique talents.

As most of you know, SFWA picks a handful of volunteers each year to serve on the "Nebula Jury," whose purpose it is to collectively read everything published in the field during the year, and add a worthy candidate to each of the categories on the final Nebula Award ballot. Nancy Etchemendy is here this issue to relate what she learned while on the Nebula Jury in 1988, and reading from the 90% of the annual SF&F output that you and I generally do not read. The news from the front is that the rank-and-file are not looking so good.

Ronald Anthony Cross challenges the hubris of hard-SF authors who sneer at fantasy writers for playing with the net down. Does faster-than-light travel represent merely another fantasy device, no different than magic? I hope to hear from all you physics majors on this one.

A Near-Miss: One thing that I had hoped could be in this issue was a broad but concise overview of the world of SF in 1989. The idea came to be last year while I was struggling to complete my Hugo nominations and *Locus* and *Science Fiction Chronicle* reader polls forms. (I've never run a traditional readers poll in this magazine, although veteran readers may remember *The Thrust Awards* which I gave out in the early 1980s for *worst* and *most disappointing* SF and fantasy of the year.) Despite all the resources at my disposal, I have continually found that determining what material and people were eligible for various categories, and evaluating them, is a herculean task.

The review of the year in *Locus* provides a reasonably good handle on the four major fiction categories, and the Nebula recommendations list provides a continually-updated guide throughout the year as well. But even though I try to keep up on the non-

fiction books being published, it was not easy to determine which were published during the year and weigh their relative merits. And what movies and TV shows appeared that might be eligible? What about audio tapes—they qualify as "dramatic presentations," don't they? What were the accomplishments of various editors this year, and how do you compare novel editors, anthology editors and magazine editors? What professional and fan artists and fan writers had good years or bad, prolific years or lean ones? What semiprozines and fanzines were published that stood out above the crowd, in quality, or even in quantity? What new writers are eligible for the Campbell, and what have they written? And what about things not on any ballot or poll category? Were there any graphic SF stories (*i.e.* comic books) worthy of notice?

I assigned assistant editor Anthony Trull to try to get such a review together for this issue, but time was just too short. I hope we can get in some sort of "SF Year in Review" next issue—even if it will be too late for help in nominating for awards—and aim towards developing a wide-ranging but succinct overview of 1990 for the Spring 1991 issue.

Coming Soon: Another column by Poul Anderson, Paul DiFilippo on J. G. Ballard, Ardath Mayhar on science and metaphysics in SF, Stephen A. Kallis, Jr. on Doc Smith, a personal retrospective on Tom Godwin by his stepdaughter, and interviews with Michael G. Coney, Lisa Goldstein, Barbara Hambly, Michael P. Kube-McDowell, Janet Morris, Boris Valejo, Lawrence Watt-Evans, and Connie Willis. ■

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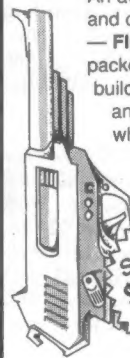
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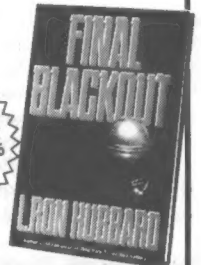
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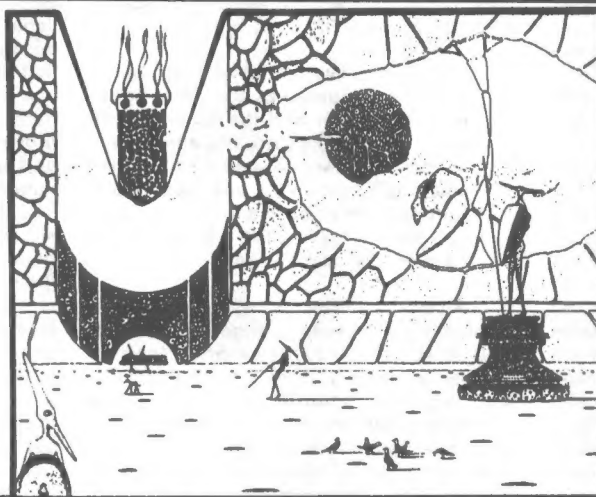
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MORE THAN A MASTERPIECE?



by Michael Bishop

I know exactly when I bought my first copy of **More Than Human**. I was a second looney in the air force, a shavetail, and the book's reputation as one of the premier achievements of 1950s SF had led me to hunt everywhere for it through most of a cold Rocky Mountain winter. According to a notation in green ink on its title page, I bought my copy on March 28, 1969, in Denver, Colorado, paying fifty cents for a used paperback ("A Ballantine Science Fiction Classic") cover-priced at seventy-five.

The jacket painting features five human figures superimposed on a fragile, cloud-threaded sky set above a rolling, green landscape with low shrubbery of a darker, more ominous green. These figures resemble ghosts. You can see through their insubstantial bodies to the blue sky and the green grass behind them.

Never judge a book by its cover.

Sorry, but I guess I did. As an impatient 23-year-old resolved to learn all I could about 20th-century science fiction as quickly as possible, I convinced myself I'd found a bona fide treasure; and the uncredited cover painting—which I no longer view as quite so hauntingly Dali-esque—made me believe that a legendary master of the genre was about to speak, authoritatively, to me. Stupid, eh? Because I've seen at least three other covers on **More Than Human** since 1969, and none of them, no matter how fine or how crude, has added a jot to, or subtracted a jot from, the intense, lyric prose of the novel itself.

But, sometimes, accidents like the weather, your age, the flux of your sinuses, and, yes, even dubiously mystical cover paintings can color a breakthrough reading experience, and my introduction to Theodore Sturgeon's best novel included a visual boost in the form of that eerie, somehow consciousness-expanding illustration. I was

a serviceman, a long way from Georgia, and the used paperback in my hands looked—to me—like release, freedom, apotheosis.

In fact, it was.

I read **More Than Human** in my cell-like bedroom in a two-man BOQ apartment under the tall, snow-blanketed ridge of the Rampart Range on the United States Air Force Academy, where I taught English to cadet candidates at the Preparatory School.

I read about Lone, Janie, Bonnie and Beanie, Baby, Gerry, and, finally, Hip Barrows, the man who brings to this band of misfits a talent allowing it to achieve its potential as an evolutionary step beyond *Homo sapiens*. I read about these people, and I was able to believe—not so much in the oddly original notion of the superman embodied in **More Than Human** as in the strength of Sturgeon's talent and the clarity of his vision. Here was a man who lived, felt, and wrote with both the cold eye of the mind and the annealing fires of the heart. A poet. And I was still young enough to fall under the spell of his poetry.

At almost exactly the same time, I was reading other good stuff from the sci-fi shelves. In fact, the other classic novel I always associate with **More Than Human** is Arthur C. Clarke's **Childhood's End**, which first appeared in the same year—1953—as Sturgeon's masterpiece. But **Childhood's End** concludes with the elevation of terrestrial humanity to a kind of star-faring group spirit, and the grandiosity of this ending, given the somewhat simpler evolutionary mechanics posited in **More Than Human**, made me see Sturgeon's as the more likely—or, anyway, the more immediate—scenario.

Actually, I enjoyed each book on its own terms, but I still think of the one when I think of the other and the similarity of the novels' endings—once you award Clarke the

laurel for epic inventiveness and Sturgeon the trophy for down-home compassion—strongly hinted that the scientist Clarke and the romantic Sturgeon had snatched the same mind-boggling concept out of either our racial subconscious or the charged atmosphere of the early Cold War era. Both writers seemed to be saying that the only way to survive the menace of screwball ideologies, and of the Bomb, was to join mentally, bodily, and spiritually in an entity greater than our finite, stand-alone selves. I'd joined the Air Force, but *that* wasn't the kind of union either Sturgeon or Clarke meant, and so I was free to go on badmouthing military stupidity and dreaming my SF-assisted dreams of transcendence.

In the impact it had on me as a young man dreaming of becoming a writer, **More Than Human** (along with Clarke's novel, **The Left Hand of Darkness** by Ursula K. Le Guin, and lots of New Wave fiction from either England or Damon Knight's **Orbit** anthologies) came to be more than a masterpiece for me. It was a benchmark, a stop on my secret highway to post-service fulfillment, and one more piece of evidence that you could write about human beings—not robots, or bug-eyed aliens, or exploding stars—and still be writing powerful, wholly legitimate science fiction.

Before coming into the service, all I had known of SF was Jules Verne, H. G. Wells, a smattering of paperback Heinlein, the quirky satirical-philosophical novels of Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., and a virtual ton of Ray Bradbury, whom I loved with the glee of a fanatic—but now, having read Sturgeon, Clarke, Le Guin, Ellison, Russ, Panshin, and some of the many fine writers publishing books as Ace Science Fiction Specials, I realized that SF was a good place to be, maybe even *the* place to be, and **More Than Human** played a

pivotal role in shaping my realization.

What to say about the novel itself? First, it became a "novel" by a route often pursued by genre science fiction writers in those days, namely, the route of the "fix-up." A fix-up is a gathering of connected stories, one or more of which have sold as independent units to the magazines, that the writer organizes in a sequence hinting at novelistic design and capable of being read as a single sustained narrative. Other famous fix-ups from about the same time include *The Weapon Shops of Isher* and several others by A. E. van Vogt, who coined the term; *The Martian Chronicles* by Ray Bradbury; *City* by Clifford Simak; Isaac Asimov's *Foundation* series; and James Blish's *The Seedling Stars*.

I mention this fact because at the heart of *More Than Human* is Sturgeon's *tour de force* novella, "Baby Is Three," which appeared in *Galaxy* magazine in 1952. Also, Sturgeon was a natural short-story writer whose forays into longer lengths sometimes struck his critics, and even some of his admiring colleagues, as commercially driven aberrations. I'm not disparaging the novels. *The Dreaming Jewels* (1950), *Venus Plus X* (1960), and, outside the SF field, *Some of Your Blood* (1961) show what snap, sinew, and conviction he could bring to that length, but his stories—"Microcosmic God," "It," "Bianca's Hands," "Thunder and Roses," "Saucer of Loneliness," "The World Well Lost," "The Other Celia," "And Now the News. . .," "The Man Who Lost the Sea," "Slow Sculpture," and dozens of others—made his reputation. They continue to be anthologized, adapted for movies or television, and marveled at.

"Baby Is Three" would have been one of Sturgeon's most famous stories even if he hadn't later bookended it with two more stunning novellas to build his second and unquestionably best novel, *More Than Human*. After appearing in the October issue of *Galaxy*, in the same autumn that Eisenhower first defeated Adlai Stevenson for the presidency, "Baby Is Three" provoked a lot of admiring comment; and two decades later it was the fifth top vote-getter in a polling of the Science Fiction Writers of America for a *Hall of Fame* anthology devoted to novelettes and novellas.

(Among the top ten stories, it finished behind only "Who Goes There?" by John W. Campbell, Jr., the original novella version of *A Canticle for Leibowitz* by Walter M. Miller, Jr., Jack Williamson's "With Folded Hands," and Wells's *The Time Machine*. It placed ahead of "Vintage Season" by Henry Kuttner and C. L. Moore, "The Marching Morons" by C. M. Kornbluth, Robert A. Heinlein's "Universe" and "By His Bootstraps," and Lester del Rey's "Nerves." And from this same poll, Ben Bova determined that SFWA's most esteemed writers—they ended up one and two—were Heinlein and Sturgeon. Sturgeon, I feel, won his place for the kind of insightful ferocity on headlong display in "Baby Is Three.")

I'm guessing, but the popularity, along with the narrative and intellectual richness, of "Baby Is Three" must have led Sturgeon to believe that an expansion of this story—better, a cunning fore and aft *amplification* of both its outcast characters and its unique

ideas about human evolution—would produce a *sui generis* wow of a novel. If so, he was right, and the novellas he wrote to bracket "Baby Is Three"—"The Fabulous Idiot" and "Morality"—are not only worthy companions, but tales that glisten and shimmer in ways that make the whole of *More Than Human*, like *Homo Gestalt* itself, a great deal more than the sum of its parts.

The initial paragraph of "The Fabulous Idiot" is among the most vivid openings in American post-war SF:

The idiot lived in a black and gray world, punctuated by the white lightning of hunger and the flickering of fear. His clothes were old and many-windowed. Here peeped a shin-bone, sharp as a cold chisel, and there in the torn coat were ribs like the fingers of a fist. He was tall and flat. His eyes were calm and his face was dead.

An idiot; a little girl with telekinetic powers; a pair of even younger, Negro kids who teleport, naked, from one place to another; a mewling, Down's-syndrome baby who cogitates, computes, and relays its weirdly profound musings to the little girl; a murderous eight-year-old orphan whose eyes can pinwheel hypnotically; and, finally, a grown man, whose talent is . . . something he doesn't suspect, at least not until the little girl, grown, rescues him from a chilly cell-block both to fulfill himself and to "blesh" with the group as a kind of Jimminy Cricket superego. From these elements, Sturgeon creates high science fiction art.

No, "high science fiction art" isn't necessarily an oxymoron, and Sturgeon demonstrates as much in the way he places "Baby Is Three" at the heart of his narrative, then looks backward in "The Fabulous Idiot" to lay down a complex and engaging prologue to Gerry's visit to Dr. Stern and then ahead in "Morality" to show us the means by which *Homo Gestalt* may not only attain immortality but operate in ethical symbiosis with the mortal creatures from which it has sprung and to which it owes the Old Testament respect that any human child owes its parents. Respect, honor, reverence, and love.

More Than Human is remarkable among post-war SF fix-ups for its literacy (even if Bradbury's *The Martian Chronicles* clearly has the greater reputation for stylistic grace). But (once again like *The Martian Chronicles*), it is also sociologically remarkable for the easy candor with which it presents the idea that Negroes—at that time, the genteel euphemism was "coloreds"—will be a part of the evolutionary brew that precipitates a multi-individual entity like *Homo Gestalt*. And "Baby Is Three" appeared two years before Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, three years before the bus boycott in Montgomery, more than a decade before the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 became law. Both sociologically and anthropologically, then, Sturgeon was on the side of the Good Guys long before too many Americans had even admitted to themselves that racial oppression existed here.

Bonnie and Beanie, zipping around like a pair of skinnydipping hummingbirds, must have shocked the socks off, or annoyed the hell out of, many of *Galaxy's* readers, for these girls are indisputably among the first

significant black characters ever to pop up in an American SF novel. Sturgeon doesn't treat them with much depth or verisimilitude ("Ho-ho" or "Ooop," says Bonnie; "He-hee" or "Eeep," says Beanie), and nowadays a militant critic might accuse Sturgeon of unconscious racism or sexism for making these girls' ability to teleport contingent on shedding their clothes, as if he'd overdosed on bare-breasted native women in the *National Geographic* of his boyhood. ("Why doesn't Janie get naked, huh? For that matter, why doesn't Lone or Gerry?") But the simple fact that Sturgeon dared to use black characters in a narrative prophesying the evolutionary transcendence of our entire species clearly proves that he was both ahead of his time and uncompromising in his belief that humanity—all of humanity—must, well, blesh.

If Clarke's technological science fiction stories preaged the space race, then Sturgeon's character-oriented stories prefigured the sociological ferment of the civil rights struggle. They didn't cause it, mind, but they held up a glass to American injustice and let that injustice flicker disturbingly even in the pulp escapism printed in *Galaxy*, *Astounding*, and *Fantasy & Science Fiction*. In this sense, *More Than Human* is a reassuringly human document and a novel that both mirrors and transcends its era, just as Sturgeon's amazing *Homo Gestalt* both mirrors and transcends the confused human beings of mid-century America.

In my last year at the Prep School, my fourth and final year in the service, I taught a science fiction course of my own design as an elective. I used the first *Science Fiction Hall of Fame* volume (containing Sturgeon's "Microcosmic God") as my primary text, but I also required my cadet candidates to read novels: *The Time Machine*, *Childhood's End*, *A Canticle for Leibowitz*, *A Case of Conscience* by James Blish, Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange* (which Stanley Kubrik had just filmed), *Camp Concentration* by Thomas M. Disch (a mordant, experimental antiwar novel that prompted howls of outrage from some of my more Neanderthal would-be airmen), and, of course, *More Than Human*.

Was I really teaching science fiction? Yes and no, for it also seemed to me that I was teaching a hands-on variety of ethics in a technological age muddied by cold-war fears and a bloody little war in Southeast Asia. What an exhilarating comfort to be able to read aloud: ". . . multiplicity is our first characteristic; unity our second. As your parts know they are parts of you, so must you know that we are parts of humanity."

I stayed stateside during the Vietnam War. I stayed stateside in uniform. I neither ran off to Canada nor fought in the jungles, and I have ever since carried a shifting backpack of guilt for not doing the one or the other. But sometimes I recall the SF elective I designed, and I think—I dampen my half-assed guilt by assuming—that some of the cadet candidates who read those books must have become more humane officers as a result. It is probably utter bunk to think so, but I preserve the hope.

And when I became a civilian again, it was with a feeling akin to Gerry Thompson's at the end of *More Than Human*: "And humbly, he joined their company."■

An Interview With James Morrow

James Morrow is hardly a novice, but he is a newly-arrived writer. He is the author of four novels, *The Wine of Violence*, *The Continent of Lies*, and, most notably, the Nebula-finalist *This Is the Way the World Ends*, a remarkable, surreal vision of the aftermath of a nuclear holocaust, in which last few survivors are put on trial by the "unadmitted" people who cannot be born due to the accidental extinction of the human race. His newest novel, just out from Morrow (no relation) is *Only Begotten Daughter*, in which the younger sister of Jesus is immaculately conceived in an Atlantic City sperm-bank.

Clearly this is a writer who takes risks. He has recently embarked on a, well, blasphemous—or perhaps just humanistically revisionist—series of biblical tales under the overall title "Bible Stories for Adults." "The Deluge" won a Nebula award in 1989.

Morrow is both an insider and an outsider in science fiction. He straddles the fence in an ideal way, with genre-recognition to assure sales, but mainstream hardcover publication to assure critical recognition. Watch him. If he persists, he may be one of the biggest names in the field (and out of it) in a few years.

QUANTUM: *This Is the Way the World Ends* seems to have made your reputation very suddenly. You know the syndrome: twenty years of hard work and you're an overnight success. So, what were you doing all that time?

Morrow: Unlike many science fiction writers, I didn't grow up as a fan or a scholar of the genre. My tastes were catholic. I read some science fiction, but not to the exclusion of the mainstream. I had a general passion for narrative, and one day I found myself possessed by a story I just had to tell. I thought initially of doing it as a screenplay, but I saw that chances of selling something to Hollywood were dismal. So I wrote the story as a novel. It happened to occur on another planet in an alternative society. So I took it to an agent saying, "This is *probably* a science fiction novel. You tell me." And she said, "Well maybe this could capture a mainstream audience, but to be safe we should call it science fiction. The editor she had in mind for it, Donald Hutter, was just starting an unorthodox science-fiction line at Holt, Rinehart, and Winston. So the novel, *The Wine of Violence*, came out as a hardback, got good newspaper reviews, and, as is the way with hardcovers, vanished without a trace—no coverage in the SF press at all. That's partly because I knew nothing about the dynamics of the genre, the politics of science fiction. I have since learned. I resisted those politics for years. I said, "A writer should write, not fly to conventions or worry about the business realities of publishing, or even subscribe to *Locus*." Now I'm quite accepting the fact that there is a public relations side to one's career, that it pays to keep in touch with readers, editors, agents, reviewers, and especially other writers. I even subscribe to *THRUST*.

QUANTUM: I remember seeing your first two novels when they came out, and I think I can tell you exactly what the reaction was: Gee these books look fairly interesting, but they're hardcover books by someone I've never



by Darrell Schweitzer

heard of, and hardcover books are expensive, so . . . too bad.

Morrow: I was very naive. My agent said, "Great—you've got a hardback sale. With most first novels in science fiction we can't even consider the hardcover houses." But it's a real tradeoff, because then when the paperback comes out, the edition readers can afford, there's no sense of a debut. Meanwhile you owe half your advance and royalties to the original publisher. Nevertheless, I want to stay with the hardcover format now that I'm starting to acquire a reputation. You do get library sales, of course, and more extensive reviews, and a certain nebulous prestige. I used to hear about other first SF novels, and I assumed that those writers were in my situation, but it usually turned out that they were already well known through the magazines. I will confess to having had contempt for the magazines when I entered the field. I asked, "Why would a serious author want to write for a digest that's printed on what looks like what happens to recycled paper after it's been recycled again?" I've changed on that because I see that quality is where you find it, and you can find it in a science-fiction magazine as readily as in a

literary quarterly. I'm not as snotty these days. I'm pleased to be published in *Fantasy and Science Fiction*. In fact, as you mentioned in your review [of *This Is the Way the World Ends*, in *Aboriginal SF*], I had a recent cover story in *F&SF*, and I'm proud of that. So I've been converted.

QUANTUM: Do you now find that mainstream critics and readers say, "Oh, he's become a *mere* science-fiction writer, so I can ignore him"?

Morrow: [Laughs.] That hasn't been so much of a problem since I was already being ignored. *This Is the Way the World Ends*, interestingly enough, was the most mainstream-looking of my books in its hardcover presentation, and it got extensive reviews in several places—*Newsday*, the *Los Angeles Times Book Review*, the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. I noticed that you didn't review it for *The Inquirer*. Somehow it ended up on the desk of Carlin Romano [the *Inquirer* books editor], who apparently didn't find any science fiction stigma on it. So he sent it on to Jay Neugeboren, who is a mainstream novelist. Neugeboren raved about it for most of an *Inquirer* page. But reviews don't translate

into sales. I probably have a handful of fans who are not science fiction readers. I'm sure there're one or two of them out there. Luckily, **This Is the Way the World Ends** will be reprinted as unabashed SF—by Ace, by the Science Fiction Book Club, by some British houses. This is like looking Death in the face and walking away—there is life after mainstream obscurity. I can't claim that the core science fiction readership is the one I want. I'm not writing for people who play Dungeons and Dragons or like *Star Trek*. But as an SF author, I will be published and get some sales, and I hope the books will filter up and get passed around, and eventually I'll connect with the audience I want—the more sophisticated science fiction reader and the more adventuresome mainstream reader.

QUANTUM: Science Fiction is the Trojan Horse of publishing. It sneaks all sorts of unwanted books and ideas into the culture. Do you think you may have gotten the best of both worlds here? The book can be snuck by people who would never read it if you tell them it's science fiction, yet at the same time there's enough genre identification that SF readers are no longer dismissing it as a hardcover by someone they've never heard of.

Morrow: That's the scenario I'd like to follow. Frankly, I am not satisfied being labeled a conventional science-fiction writer. I'm only happy with a label that runs something like "beyond science fiction" or "on the outskirts of science fiction." What does Norman Spinrad call it...?

QUANTUM: Genre-transcendent science fiction.

Morrow: Genre-transcendent, pushing the outside of the envelope. That's for me. I suspect that for my next book we'll try the same strategy, using mainstream hardcover publication to get more extensive reviews and just possibly pick up some mainstream readers, but when it comes to reprints, we'll call it science fiction.

QUANTUM: Could you say something about your next book?

Morrow: It's the first novel ever written about God's daughter. I would make that claim for it. Act One is set in contemporary Atlantic City and presents the biography of Jesus's sister. The second half takes place in a futuristic dystopia, so it will probably be regarded as science fiction by people who worry about these distinctions. The theme is the impossibility of being a deity in the 20th century. My heroine has the powers of Jesus, her brother, but not his sense of purpose, this being the Age of Uncertainty. And God is the Mother in my version, not the Father. The sister has an earthly father, and this time God's contribution to the incarnation is the egg rather than the sperm, if you will. This deity, whose name is Julie Greenberg, spends the novel trying to come to terms with her heritage, and does the world good only by sacrificing her powers. My idea is that godhead interferes with humanity; you gain your humanity by giving it up. It's a book in which the ideas are paramount. It's being driven by theme rather than by plot.

QUANTUM: This is the Way the World Ends seems largely driven by its theme. How was it created, then?

Morrow: My first two books dissatisfy me at the level of story mechanics. The plot developments were prearranged, contrived. I want to get away from that. In **This Is the Way the World Ends** I began with themes that mattered to me, not with a storyline. Essentially, I set out to write a nuclear war story that would speak for victims, not celebrate survivors. People who read early drafts of wanted it to have more narrative drive, and I eventually added some conventional suspense. But it was something of a revelation to learn that I'm a more serious writer when I hold plot in abeyance.

QUANTUM: At the same time, you have to run along the thin edge between being serious and writing a preachment, like the later Wells.

Morrow: Yes. Norman Spinrad just covered the book...not favorably. He said that it did become preachy, that it was too much of a sermon in its latter half. A lot of critics felt that the polemic was the best part because it was balanced and ironic and ambiguous. But Spinrad called my book the exception that proves the rule—it could have benefited from more genre-contrivance. I don't agree with him. But certainly it's the death of fiction when a novel becomes *good for you*, when it becomes didactic. That's why **Uncle Tom's Cabin** cannot be taken seriously as literature. If your story has a moral, you must embody that moral in authentic drama.

QUANTUM: I think the power of the book is in the image, that powerful sequence when the Unadmitted "lose the continent" and dissolve into nothingness at the end. Those last thirty pages make the book. I am reminded of the ten pages or so in Wells' **The Island of Dr. Moreau** in which the beast-men devolve. That's where Wells's story develops its power as a *vision*. We remember that rather than the *idea*.

Morrow: Certainly. It would have been a major miscalculation to have ended **This Is the Way the World Ends** with the polemical material, the war-crimes trial in which the perpetrators of World War III enter the dock for their crimes against humanity. I'm glad you noticed that structural decision. Not that many critics picked up on how those final pages make the novel a drama, not a sermon. This is the most important material for me—showing the unadmitted fading away, revealing that everything has been lost. The unadmitted really are a metaphor for loss and extinction, not simply a neat science-fiction idea.

QUANTUM: It ultimately comes out that the appeal of fiction is in emotion rather than idea.

Morrow: I'm glad to hear you say that, because I sometimes argue over emotion with my writer friends at Penn State University—I'm not teaching there, but I do run a writer's workshop in the English Department. Too often in academia the emotional core of art is lost to structural analysis, to interpreta-

tion. The name of the writing game is emotion; that's my goal. That's why I favor science fiction over other genres. I think there's much less opportunity in mystery, or in a western, or in horror, to move people in mystery the catharsis lies in the resolution of a riddle rather than in some truth of the heart. And the best science fiction is about the human heart. It's not about technology. It's not about predicting the future. It's about our present condition filtered through the *convention* of another reality.

QUANTUM: I'm reminded of an idea that came out of the criticism in *New Worlds*, that science fiction can only be about the present or the past. Thus **The Space Merchants** is clearly a novel of the 1950s, not about the future at all. So, does this mean that the future is only a device?

Morrow: I would argue that the highest science fiction is allegorical and that, yes, the future setting is a device for illuminating the present. This does not mean you're being trendy. It means you care about some immediate crisis. The convention of exporting that crisis to another planet or to the future gives you a unique perspective; it lets you be Poe's mariner studying how the maelstrom works. I think that mere extrapolation is fundamentally uninteresting. Who cares what it might really be like to colonize Mars or live in an arcology? We won't be there. The best science fiction starts when the writer stops being literal-minded, realistic, and plausible. The strongest Arthur Clarke stories are not extrapolations or predictions at all. They're mystical stories...

QUANTUM: They're visions.

Morrow: They're visions. I think the least durable work in the genre is so-called "hard" science fiction. It ages badly.

QUANTUM: In what sense is it somehow more illuminating or better to write about the present through the filter of science fiction than to write about it directly, in a realistic novel?

Morrow: Science fiction lets you paint the present on such a broad and multi-layered canvas that it becomes allegory, and suddenly you're seeing the present in a new, heightened, cosmic way. You can certainly argue that, historically, fantasy idioms were the *sine qua non* of literature, and it's only very recently that the narrative arts have become concerned with mimicking reality and with quotidian details. If you look at the sweep of literature, from epic poetry to Shakespeare, you see highly stylized ways of portraying the world. Obviously, certain truths don't yield to a realistic, mimetic approach.

QUANTUM: I think this is why the last thirty pages of **This Is the Way the World Ends** are more effective than the trial sequence. If you actually did know how to solve these problems you would be off collecting your Nobel Prize, not here at Readercon. But, ultimately you end with a vision, which is *true* but not factual.

Morrow: The trial scene does contain a solution, or at least I do a kind of commercial

for Jonathan Schell's solution—what he calls "weaponless deterrence"—but I found that most readers were indifferent to that aspect of the presentation. Fine. There's enough going on elsewhere that the book does not rise or fall on whether the author offers an answer to the arms race. Most critics reacted as you did, noting that what you take away is the fact that we're in a lot of trouble, because the *logic* of deterrence is fatally flawed. We'll have to find *something* to replace deterrence with, but what that something must be no one can say for sure. As long as that need has been identified, the book has served its purpose. Science-fiction writers are not in the business of solving political questions. We're in the business of issuing warnings, the Orwell tradition. There's a definition from Walker Percy I've always liked. He said that a novelist is like the canary that miners used to take down to test the air, and when the canary starts running around frantically and issues plaintive cries, it may be time to surface and talk things over. Science fiction novelists are miners' canaries.

QUANTUM: I've wondered what you thought of the idea that I brought up in my review, that if there actually is such a war and there is anyone around to read the book, **This Is the Way the World Ends** will be one of the few documents to provide any understanding, not in its discussions of ideas, but in the more moving and the more absurd sections.

Morrow: I was delighted to read that. No other reviewer articulated it quite that way. The arms race is so absurd it practically defies satire. A lot of the lines in the book that sound like Alice in Wonderland quotes were actually said by the people who formulate our strategic doctrine. So, yes, I was trying to mock the *reasoning* behind the arms race, rather than just rehash the post-holocaust horrors, because we've already had that, beginning with *On the Beach* and proceeding through—*War Day*, I guess, is the most recent. We've also had writers who use nuclear war to strip civilization down to the bone and then start it up again, letting the survivors found a new, more promising order. This process occurs with a novel like *The Postman*, which I admire, but David Brin's goals were different from mine. I wanted to present, I think for the first time in fiction, the latest wrinkles in strategic doctrine, and show how paradoxical and crazy they are. So if there is a nuclear war—yes, any survivors finding my book might, on their way to extinction, get a few laughs or maybe some insights into why the tragedy occurred. And it *would* be a tragedy. It would have happened because we listened to the worst in ourselves. The survivors would see it didn't have to be that way.

QUANTUM: Doesn't the phrase "strategic doctrine" sound like a religion?

Morrow: [Laughs.] It is a religion. We're worship these weapons and we look to them for a kind of salvation. We look to them to solve a lot of problems they're important to solve—most ironically, the problem of security. The trial contains a moment in which the judges admit that if they'd been in charge of the arsenal they might have become as enthralled by weapons as the defendants did. They admit that there's a fearsome

glamour to this technology, that it's very seductive. That's a major part of the dilemma, how we can confuse our worth as a nation, our power as a people, with this awesome, godlike invention. We've made a devil's act. We're not equal to our own cleverness. We're a most worthy species, but we don't have the right to cultivate this particular technology. Most technologies, yes. I'm the last person to line up with the Luddites. I'm a great defender of recombinant DNA and the Information Age and all the positive progress that Jeremy Rifkin is always attacking.

QUANTUM: Another thought on the religious aspect is one of the first descriptions of the atomic bomb, which came from Winston Churchill, who referred to it as "a miracle of deliverance."

Morrow: Yeah, and when the first one went off Oppenheimer was there and found himself quoting the *Bhagavad Gita*. "I am become death—the destroyer of worlds." He said that scientists had known sin for the first time. So again you have the theological dimension of nuclear weapons, which is partially unconscious. We're in awe of ourselves for having spawned such a thing. I think Oppenheimer didn't simply mean was not that it was immoral to create a technology of mass-murder, but that the sin lay in the fascination with it, in being seduced by the power of it, in loving the work, in having so much fun building the bomb.

QUANTUM: Like many technological breakthroughs, the atomic bomb was really invented for a very short-term purpose, which was to forestall the invasion of Japan. So the problem is not so much the invention, but it still being *around* after its initial use.

Morrow: Of course it's a raging controversy *whether* ending World War II was the real reason the bomb was dropped. Certainly the Manhattan Project was begun out of legitimate fear that the Nazis were on the same track. But a crucial turning-point occurred when the war in Europe ended prior to the Project's completion. One scientist, Joseph Rotblat, did drop out at that juncture—much his credit. From documents that have surfaced recently, some historians now argue that the attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki were really the opening shots of the Cold War. We wanted to cow the Soviets. Even before Hiroshima, it was clear that Japan would soon surrender. The issue was under what terms: would the surrender be unconditional, or would the Emperor remain in power? I'm not saying the decision was unambiguous. It's not a decision I would have wanted to make. Nevertheless, we have this paradox of a bomb which was built to win a specific war, and once that was accomplished, invent a reason to build more of them, and that reason became deterrence, which was easier to say than "This technology entralls us."

QUANTUM: Are you perhaps of the correct age and circumstance that if the bomb had not been dropped, you might not have been born? I know I was. My father's first combat would have been the invasion of Japan.

Morrow: And your father might have been

killed?

QUANTUM: Yes. He was inexperienced at that time. He'd never fought, and green troops are more likely to get killed than seasoned ones.

Morrow: My father was not in uniform because he worked for a steel mill and was part of the civilian war effort. But, yes, I appreciate that argument. The new William Styron novel, which is supposed to be out any day now, is about American troops waiting to invade the Japanese islands and their elation when the them bomb delivers them. But it's still an ambiguous situation. We'll never know who wasn't because some political decision was made, because a father was removed from the face of the Earth, or because a couple decided not to have a child. After the bombing of Hiroshima, lots of potential children never got conceived, because their potential parents were dead. There's a whole other novel in these questions. Maybe I'll write it.

QUANTUM: Are you generally optimistic about the future of the human race? Is there going to be somebody around to read your books in a couple decades or more?

Morrow: At the risk of being misinterpreted, I'd say that for all the depression and horror I endured while researching and writing **This Is the Way the World Ends**, I did come away sensing that there is a survival mechanism built into us, and that it may transcend the arms race. We're irrational and emotional, but we're not ultimately a psychotic species, so I'm willing to throw in with the optimists. There's no profit in fatalism. Having a child has made me realize that the prophets of doom do a great disservice to the human spirit. What right do we have to say that we were born into a generation that's going to make it, but as for those of you coming up, forget it? I think it's immoral to send that message to the next generation, to tell them, "Your future is worthless," whether we're pointing to nuclear weapons or television or pollution at the same time. But I do believe in the Orwellian concept of the warning, as opposed to the prophecy. We have to play the canary squawking at the bottom of the mine, saying, "Let's surface. Let's get some air. Let's talk things over." Some people argue that nuclear weapons have been around for so long it's obvious they'll never be used. But we all know the answer to that—when you jump off a 20-story building the first nineteen floors are a pussycat. Deterrence works great until it doesn't, which is the dilemma I was dramatizing in my novel. I like to think we will eventually outgrow these weapons, and we will come to recognize that they are unworthy of us. That growing up may occur when a generation comes to power that is not wedded to strategic doctrine, a generation that does not see war as a heroic and noble—that sees war as a thoroughly disgraceful human activity. That generation will not be nostalgic for World War II because they won't have experienced it. They may choose to fight the good fight against Communism, but they won't threaten to end the world in the process.

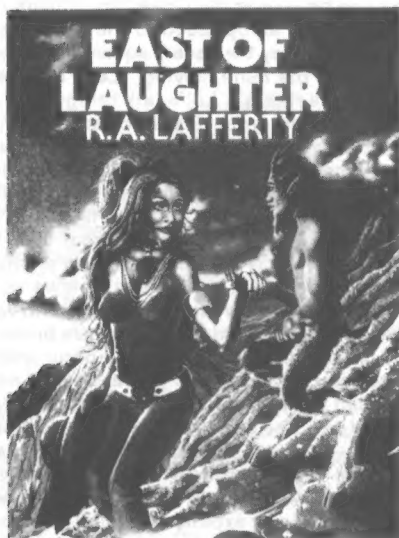
QUANTUM: Thank you, James Morrow. ■

The great temptations are to compare R. A. Lafferty to David Lindsay and Jorge Luis Borges; I name them temptations because there is so much more to Lafferty than that. So let me begin by saying that he is undoubtedly a creature of genius in the only true and original meanings of those words. (Lafferty is not, of course, himself a genius in the decadent modern sense—an infant savant of 30 or 50, like the German genius of whom I recently read who desires to subject himself to a surgical procedure to have his indeterminable intelligence reduced. He is far too wise for that.)

A genius—the real thing—is a mono-present spirit, that is to say, a spirit capable of animating only one person, place, or thing at the same instant; it is this genius that supplies its fortunate possessor with those distinguishing peculiarities of insight, knowledge, and—as it were—style. And though it may survive him, he cannot long survive it. To quote the excellent John Cuthbert Lawson, of Pembroke: "One word of caution only is required before we proceed to the consideration of the various species of genii not yet described. It must not be assumed that all genii, on the analogy of the tree-nymphs, die along with the dissolution of their dwelling-places; the existence of the genius and that of the haunted object are indeed always closely and intimately united, but not necessarily in such a manner as to preclude the migration of the genius on the dissolution of the first abode into a second. The converse proportion however, that any object could enjoy prolonged existence after the departure of the indwelling power, may be considered improbable.

"The genii with whom I now propose to deal fall into five main divisions according to their habitation. These are first buildings, secondly water, thirdly mountains, caves, and desert places, fourthly the air, and fifthly human beings."

Socrates, as we know, had such a spirit, which he called his daemon; its place was with him, but though he left this world long ago, his spirit is not yet wholly dead. He was



A slightly modified version of this article was published as an afterword to the Morrigan Publishers edition of *East of Laughter* by R. A. Lafferty.

An Introduction to R. A. Lafferty and *East of Laughter* by Gene Wolfe

a man of genius, and so is Lafferty.

Thus it will come as no surprise to you to be told that he is unrecognized, except by you, Les Escott, Chris Drumm, me, and several thousand other people. And it will do none of us any good at all—as it will certainly do Lafferty none—to rush about in the corridors of power shouting, "There is a cranky old man in Oklahoma who is possessed of a tutelary spirit! He is surely the greatest man in the world, possibly the greatest man in the entire United States, and conceivably the greatest man in Oklahoma!" I have tried it, and it does not work; the sole good thing that happened as a result of it was that an unfledged (now there's a significant expression, though you will not know it as such, having not yet begun *East of Laughter*) girl editor had me to lunch to talk about a miserably bad book she had just bought from an unbearably attractive blonde. I was able to hornswoggle her into sending me a Xerox of the manuscript, and thus I became at no cost the possessor of about 10 pounds of first-rate white paper, blank on the better side. Some benefit from that may yet appear—though not, I fear to Lafferty, and certainly not to the blonde.

He is of course an Irishman. I have assumed all along that you knew it, because it is the one thing the general reader (you probably thought yourself no more than a colonel; but it is in my power to promote you, General, and I have just done so) does know about him. Pedants, to be sure, insist that he cannot be an Irishman because he was, and as the popular song has it, Born in America—and he lives in Tulsa. In this case as in so many others, it is the popular feeling that is correct; and indeed there is nothing more characteristic of the true Irishman, and particularly the Irish writer of genius, than that he does not live in Ireland. See for example Lord Dunsany, George Bernard Shaw, James Joyce, and many others.

Lafferty is also an American, just as Mr. Dooley was, and there is no contradiction there. Saint Brandon (of whom you will soon read) discovered America long before Columbus, as did an entire collection of miscellaneous Vikings and Phoenicians, Chinese, Japanese, Portuguese fishermen, and a baseball team from Cleveland; thus is quite allowable to be both American and Irish—or a resident of Minnesota, for that matter.

There is a Lafferty story that should be better known than it is, however. I don't mean a short story, of course—all of those should be much better known than they are, and if I were to begin making a list of favor-

ites I would use up most of the space allotted to me and drive you crazy, since you would then have to shake down all the book dealers of the world to find them. No, I mean a story about Lafferty himself, a story I am assured is true. It is simply that at 20 he was told by a writing teacher that he should not write until he was at least 20 years older.

And he believed this person, quit, and returned to writing at 40. Few of us follow our teachers' instructions quite so literally as that—and to be frank, I think that there are very few teachers whose instructions deserve it. Possibly it was this literal-mindedness that got Lafferty his genius in the first place. The kind of people who pontificate about writers are awfully fond of saying that all the good ones have some sort of kink, something about their thinking—right or wrong—that takes an odd and unexpected turn. But it seems to me that the truth lies nearer the opposite pole, that all or at least most great writers possess a directness, a habit of looking certain things straight in the face, that seems oddly angled to the rest of us only because we are so accustomed to peering at life and love, death and much else out of the corners of our eyes.

For example, let's take the young, handsome, fair, smiling, incredibly urbane, bright of feature and open of soul young man covered with blood who is discovered in Roderick Outreach's room immediately after Roderick's murder.

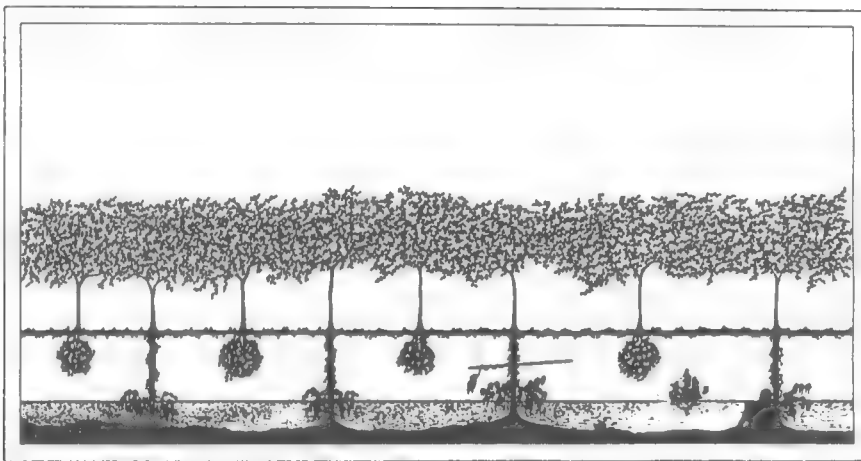
Oh, didn't I tell you that *East of Laughter* is a murder mystery? Well, it is, among other things.

This young man, I was about to say, reminds us very much of a very similar figure who appears so mysteriously in the first chapter of David Lindsay's *A Voyage to Arcturus*. You may recall that Mr. Backhouse the medium, who "dreams with open eyes," is on the point of producing his apparition in the bogus Egyptian temple prepared by Mrs. Trent, when the butler announces the arrival of two more guests: "Mr. Maskull, Mr. Nightspore."

"Everyone turned round. Faull rose to welcome the late arrivals. Backhouse also stood up, and stared hard at them.

"The two strangers remained standing by the door, which was closed quietly behind them. They seemed to be waiting for the mild sensation caused by their appearance to subside before advancing into the room. Maskull was a kind of giant, but broader and more robust of physique than most giants."

And so on. Notice that there is a very slight suggestion that these two may in fact



be apparitions Backhouse has produced. He has several times insisted on beginning at nine o'clock; and it is at nine, just as he is ready to begin, that they appear. Note also that Maskull is a giant. You are about to make the acquaintance of another, Atrox Fabulinus. (His name means "terrible liar." I will leave the name of Lindsay's giant to you.)

Since I am about to tell you where Lindsay went wrong—and Lafferty right—at some length, it is only fair to Lindsay that I first tell you what was right about him; but though there was a great deal of it, I'm going to keep it brief and not attempt a balanced evaluation.

Lindsay was a mystic of no mean vision. He really did see, and see quite clearly, things of great importance of which most of us are no more than vaguely aware; furthermore he could make us see them. In these respects—and they are as fundamentally significant as any things concerning a writer can be—he was very like Robert Blake. On Tormance, a world circling Arcturus, Maskull undergoes weird physical changes that both reflect and intensify the emotions and sensations with which he must grapple—a third arm for violence, for example. To the best of my knowledge Lindsay invented this device, and I know of no other writer who has used it successfully.

Now let us return to Backhouse's seance.

While a concealed orchestra plays Mozart, ectoplasm rises from the floor of the fake temple. The body of a handsome young man materializes, and when Faull, the owner of the London house where all this is taking place, squeezes its flaccid hand, the body comes to life—or at least appears to do so.

As Maskull tries to question it, Krag (a stranger) bursts into the room. He is "a thick, shortish man, with surprising muscular development and a head far too large in proportion to his body. His beardless yellow face indicated...a mixture of sagacity, brutality, and humor."

Krag wanders around for a minute or two making mysterious rude remarks, then:

Humor vanished from his face, like sunlight from a landscape, leaving it hard and rocky. Before anyone realized what he was doing, he encircled the soft, white neck of the materialized shape with his hairy hands and, with a double turn, twisted it completely around. A faint, unearthly shriek sounded, and the body fell in a heap on the

floor. Its face was uppermost. the guests were unutterably shocked to observe that its expression had changed from the mysterious but fascinating smile to a vulgar, sordid, bestial grin, which cast a cold shadow of moral nastiness into every heart.

I don't suppose that any single paragraph can give us the key to any writer of note—but this one comes very, very close to it. It is absolutely central to understanding Lindsay, and the most essential element, the key within the key as it were, is that word "vulgar." Remember that Lindsay used it, and how it was used; we will be coming back to it.

Now let's see what Lafferty has to say in a rather similar scene in the book you are about to read:

Hilary Ardri was the first of them into the Sky Studio. And yet he faced immediately a man who was strange to him, a young, handsome, fair, smiling, incredibly urbane man, bright of feature, open of soul, and covered with blood. The outstanding things about him were that he was smiling and covered with blood.

"Who are you?" Hilary demanded.... "Who are you, man! Caesar Oceano, Denis Lollardy, seize this man! It is all wrong about him! Leo, block the door to this Sky Room and be sure that nobody goes out!"

"It's blocked, Hilary. Nobody gets out!" the boyish Leo Parisi swore.

"The man is like quicksilver, Hilary," Caesar complained as they skirried and grappled and fought. "But we have him here now like a rat in a corner. We will—"

The lights in the Sky Studio went out, and for a moment the starlight through the sky lights and sides was not able to pick up the slack. One, two, three seconds. Then the lights came on again, and Mary Brandy had her hand on the switch. Caesar Oceano and Denis Lollardy were both stretched on the floor dazed, and the strange man was not in the room.

Caesar Oceano and Denis Lollardy, I should add, are the good guys.

Now the truly wrong thing about Lindsay was that he quite honestly believed that Krag was the good guy—that he would say that his scene and Lafferty's are more nearly parallel than they actually are, in other

words. Krag's true name on Tormance is Surtur, on Earth it is Pain, and key (as I said before) is in that single word "vulgar"—what it means, and what it has come to mean.

It is, by no very great leap, derived from the Latin word *vulgaris*, which according to my Latin dictionary means: common, general, ordinary, conventional, usual, everyday, commonplace, democratic, plebeian, and belonging to the masses. So that I can show you what all this means, please think of a dog. It can be your own dog, or the neighbor's dog that wakes you up in the middle of the night, or even a dog of the exceedingly well-bred sort who is called Mama's Hopeful Crusader or something of that kind, though he is "Pal" to his friends.

Scientifically, all these dogs we have just thought of are called *canis familiaris*, "familiar dog" and even "family dog," which indeed describes them pretty well. But a hundred years ago, they were not *canis familiaris* at all. (And yes, this is an example of evolution, the evolution of language.) In those benighted days, they were *canis vulgaris*, and Carolus Linnaeus or whoever it was who gave them that name, did not in the least mean to insult them. He merely intended to say that Spot, Fido, Pal, and indeed all their grandchildren, nephews, and cousins, were what is commonly, ordinarily, conventionally, usually, and democratically called a "dog," that this was what the ordinary men and women who did not worry about scientific nomenclature meant when they said, "dog."

Later, as I told you, the name had to be changed; and about half the social history of the last three centuries is tied up (like a dog that has run around and around the lamp-post to which he is tied until his collar is strangling him) in the reason for that change.

Right about now, General, you're thinking that I'm getting us awfully far from Lindsay, and that we've been out of sight of Lafferty for at least a page. But you're wrong. Lafferty is a vulgar writer, in the old, original sense of that word. That, I suppose, verges upon being an outrageous statement; but I will go further. I will contend that the expression on the face of the murdered boy in Lindsay's scene—the exact "vulgar, sordid, bestial grin" which so horrified Mr. Faull and his distinguished guests, is precisely Lafferty's most characteristic expression, though not, of course, his only expression.

And to answer the question you now wish to ask me, Krag has indeed tried to murder Lafferty; and is trying still.

It has often been remarked that the grandfather and the grandchild are natural allies; but the reason has seldom been explained. It is simply this—that the grandchild represents the generation that must try to set right its parents' mistakes, and the grandfather that which came to maturity before they were made. So it is with Lafferty and us. Lafferty represents the old human sanity. He is the ambassador dispatched to the late 20th Century by Dr. Johnson and Benjamin Franklin, Socrates and St. Paul. And theirs was a conservative point of view that cannot be said to have been conserved, since the conservatives (most of all) have forgotten it. Theirs was a liberal point of view so wildly radical and revolutionary that no one in the past several centuries has dared set it free again. If I were to try to expound all of it in detail, it would require a thicker book

than this one, and I would surely make a fool of myself 20 times over. But for the purpose that has brought you and me to these pages, the purpose of drawing some sort of sketch-map of the lands *East of Laughter*, it can be summed up in a sentence: It consisted of admitting at every point in all discussions and all actions that things are exactly what they in fact are.

That point of view, just for example, would never dream of confusing the freedom to speak of each individual citizen (which it thinks sacred) with the freedom of a 10- or 20-billion-dollar corporation (which it knows is invariably meretricious). It might well give up smoking—but it would do so not because it thought that smoking was a good thing, but because it thought it a bad one. It might give away money—but it would give it away not because it thought money a bad thing, but because it thought it a good one.

Lindsay represents the parental generation, if you will—the generation whose mistakes it is our most urgent business to abolish before they destroy us. For he felt, as I have said, that Krag was good. Much worse, he felt that Crystalman, he of the "vulgar, sordid, bestial grin," was evil. Krag represented the work that became labor, that became drudgery, and that at last became torment.

Before we return to that word "vulgar," let's talk briefly about "sordid," and "bestial"; both can be disposed of fairly quickly. By "sordid," Lindsay meant "sexual." Nor did he have in mind some specific sexual peculiarity that he felt singularly reprehensible.

"Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,
As to be hated needs but to be seen;
Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace."

Pope's lines have been frequently quoted, but though there is truth in them, it is not often noted that an opposite process not infrequently occurs. Rejecting some vice, we reject it in milder and milder shapes until soon we are condemning something that has ceased to be a vice at all. For all vices, even the worst, are exaggerations—overdoings of some legitimate thing.

One of the best men I have ever known once became indignant at the sight of a pregnant woman and stated emphatically that such women should be kept from public view until their children were born. It was useless to point out to him, as I did, that the woman in question was married, that pregnancy was necessary for the continuation of the human race, and that motherhood has been highly honored at all times and in all places.

My friend had started, or so I imagine, by condemning the sexual abuse of children, or something of that kind. But he had not been content with condemning it; he had proceeded to milder and milder "sins" until at last he had come (like Lindsay) to consider sex in all its forms vulgar, sordid, and bestial. Even married couples, he felt, should earnestly pretend that nothing erotic took place between them. Since the pregnant woman we had seen had surely engaged in sexual intercourse, it was shameful for her to show herself in public. Thus my friend (and I repeat that he was a very good man indeed) had now reached the point of championing something that is clearly wrong—hypocri-

ey—to hide something that is clearly right.

That is the sort of mistake Lafferty never makes. He is on the side of the angels; and indeed, he is very frequently in the van of the angels. But he is never so far in the van as to be on the other side.

"Bestial" is a tricky word, because it is used so often to castigate things that real beasts seldom or never do. Bestial cruelty, for example, is in truth innocent cruelty; the cat that plays with an unfortunate mouse is largely and perhaps entirely unaware of the mouse's fear and suffering—she plays with it just as she would with a toy mouse or a ball of yarn. In this case, however, I think that Lindsay (who was a good writer though a poor stylist) used "bestial" as it should be used: to mean "like a beast." He is saying that the dying man grinned as innocently and unself-consciously as a chimp—or a skull, for that matter.

None of Mr. Faull's guests would have grinned so, we can be sure; and Lindsay had been taught, and sincerely believed, that it was seriously wrong to grin in that natural way, like a boy in the street. But that, I think, is how Lafferty grins. His books are riotously cheerful because their author is. For all I know he may be happy at no other time, though I hope that isn't true; but when he writes he is filled with the kind of wild joy that makes men throw their hats into the air. And it shows.

"Vulgar," as I said, originally denoted something having to do with the people at large, the common people. (A similar but less marked corruption of "common" has also taken place.) The distinction was less between the masses and the aristocracy than between what was common and what was unusual; but to grasp what happened to the word, we must understand what a real aristocrat (as opposed, say, to a plutocrat) has been during most of our history. The elementary Greek *aristos* meant "best." Thus the Greek aristocrats were the "best people," just as we speak of the "first families of Virginia," and so forth. Most were rich (by Greek standards, which meant rich enough to keep a horse), but some were not. They were landowners, not successful traders or manufacturers, and though they might have houses in Athens or Thebes, aristocratic families were invariably country families; this pattern endured for most of the last 2,000 years, and it is a great deal older.

Such aristocrats might be as good as Aristides or Cimon, or as bad as Alcibiades or Alcidas. But there was a particular way in which they were never good, and one in which they were never bad. Every few years some historian studying such people—who are virtually extinct in our time—makes a discovery; and it is always the same discovery.

He finds to his boundless surprise that both mentally and morally they were remarkably like the peasants they lived beside and exploited. The aristocrat might drip with pearls and the peasant with sweat, but the peasant would have glittered in much the same way, and the aristocrat would have sweated in much the same way, had their places been reversed. When a duke rode in golden armor through the Paris of the Middle Ages, he did it because he felt it was a splendid thing to do. When the peasant watching him cheered or jeered him, he did it because he, too, felt that riding through

Paris in golden armor was splendid. If he hated his duke (as he often did) it was because he understood him; for we cannot really hate anything unless we understand it, and if we only think we understand it, we are actually hating something else. If the duke was contemptuous of his peasant, as he often was, it was because he understood his peasant equally well. The medieval church might teach the poor peasant that his duke was only a man, and teach the duke that his peasant was a man as well as he; but both of them knew something more—that the other was, in fact, the same sort of man.

Nor is that to be wondered at. In their isolated villas and chateaus, aristocrats lived surrounded, not by other aristocrats (who were in fact their rivals), but by their peasants. They had been raised by peasant servants; the men took peasant girls as mistresses, and their wives gossiped with peasant maids. An aristocrat might have better manners and even a better education (Alcibiades had been taught by Socrates, something few of our own statesmen can say), but they were very much alike under the skin. It would be astonishing if they were not.

Thus though the duke might be good, he could not be good in the prim and prissy fashion that we (often unjustly) associate with young clergymen—no man living as close as the duke did to pigs and horses, dogs and cattle, can be. He might renounce his dukedom for sackcloth and a vow of celibacy. But he did it not because he thought manors and women bad things, but because he thought holiness and abstention better things. Or (as sometimes happened) because he thought manors and women things too good for such a wicked wretch as he.

And though the duke might be very bad indeed, he could not be bad in the fashion of the British intellectuals in the book that you have come here to read. He might make a naked grab for power, and in fact he frequently did. But though he might cut his king's throat and justify it with lineage or lances, he did not try to justify it by vague claims to a mysterious moral or intellectual superiority. He knew that his fellows understood him too well; he was, in the best senses of the word, too vulgar for that.

Of the way in which the new, unusual people, the people who are not vulgar, the successful traders and manufacturers, came to exist in numbers, you can read in just about any history of our age. (Indeed you'll be fortunate to find one that tells you much about anything else.) They very definitely do not live in the midst of their sailors and factory workers. Instead, they commonly live among others like themselves, their customers and suppliers. And because their power is based not upon lineage or lances but on the most vulgar (their sense) thing of all, money, and because no one else understands them very well, they justify it by claims to a mysterious moral and intellectual superiority.

Now there really is dignity in labor and greater dignity in suffering. I feel sure many of the new people believe in them quite sincerely, and among other reasons because they are real. But they are also exceedingly convenient for the new people, who need to convince their sailors and workers that suffering and labor are good in themselves, which

as a matter of fact they aren't. If I were to force you to pile stones for 12 hours a day, I would not be doing you a favor, and if I forced you to do it under the whip, I would be doing you even less of a favor. That is the old, plain thing all the people Lafferty represents understood perfectly well, but that Lindsay did not understand at all.

Lindsay believed (as millions of others believe today) that labor was a good thing regardless of its end, and even that the less rational purpose it had, the better it was. And similarly that suffering was good of itself, and useless suffering better. He believed them not for any mysterious morally superior reason, but because he had been taught to; and he had been taught to because it was to someone's economic advantage that he and a good many millions of others did.

May I tell you how Lindsay died? (If you're eating now, or drinking something, you better put it down.) His teeth killed him. They decayed, and he suffered them to decay, faithful to Krag, until at last the septic condition of his mouth ended his life.

And that, I think, is enough about Lindsay, though it isn't nearly enough about Lafferty. Let us turn to Borges.

Lafferty (like Ellison and some other moderns) would be far more widely known if only he lived and wrote in some far-away place, preferably deep in the southern hemisphere; his art is one that our age accepts only in translation. I don't mean to say that Borges, Hermann Hesse, and the rest are bad writers—they're in fact very good writers and not infrequently excellent writers. I do mean to say that there are writers in Britain and America (and in all probability Ireland, Canada, and Australia) equally good and of the same sort, who receive less than a tenth the attention. Everyone knows, I suppose, that *The Painted Bird* was retyped with some such name as "Nancy Smith" and sent around to publishers in New York, all of whom rejected it immediately without comment. Which is not to say that *The Painted Bird* is a bad book—only that it is the sort of book no one wants today when it has been written by Nancy Smith.

I assume you have read Borges (everybody who reads has, I imagine) and have noticed that Borges himself is a character from a Borges story. Take this from "The Library of Babel," an obvious example:

The mystics claim that their ecstasy reveals to them a circular chamber containing a great circular book, whose spine is continuous and which follows the complete circle of the walls; but their testimony is suspect; their words obscure.

Upon reading that, who does not visualize Borges, the blind librarian, trailing the sensitive fingertips of one blue-veined hand along the library shelves, wandering narrow corridors in stacks that were for him forever wrapped in night and wondering whether this new place to which he had taken himself was not the old place from which he had been taken an hour before?

Or this, from "An Examination of the Work of Herbert Quain."

The worlds proposed by April March are not regressive; only the manner of writing their history is so: regressive and ramified, as I have already said.

The work is made up of thirteen chapters. The first reports the ambiguous dialogue of certain strangers on a railway platform. The second narrates the events on the eve of the first act. The third, also retrograde, describes the events of another possible eve to the first day; the fourth, still another. Each one of these three eves (each of which rigorously excludes the others) is divided into three other eves, each of a very different kind. The entire work, thus, constitutes nine novels; each novel contains three long chapters. (The first chapter, naturally, is common to all.) The temper of one of these novels is symbolic; that of another, psychological; of another, communist; of still another, anticommunist; and so on."

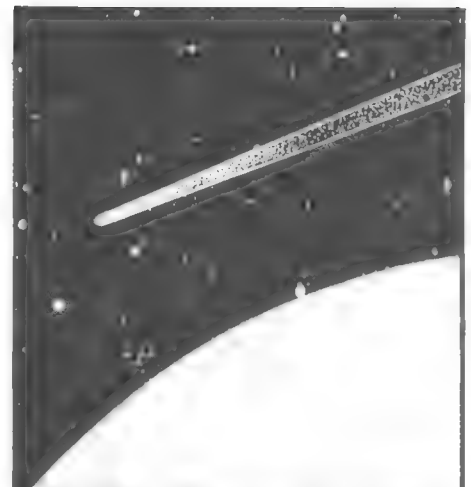
Surely no one needs to be told that "Herbert Quain" is Jorge Luis Borges.

I do not mean to say that Borges was a madman, forever wandering the forking paths of his own mind—far from it. It is quite true, of course, that geniuses sometimes go mad; it is even more true that people of subnormal ability do. Madness is not the result of genius, but of stress, which is why rats can be driven mad in a laboratory. (What a pity it is that Lafferty and Borges never collaborated on that story.)

I was going to say that just as Borges himself was clearly a Borges character, Lafferty is a Lafferty character. When you read about such colossal absurdities as John Barkley Towntower and Solomon Izzersted, you must remember that it is not more absurd that they should exist in Hilary Ardri's world than that R.A. Lafferty should exist in yours. "Atrix Fabulinus, the Roman Rabelais, once broke off the account of his hero Raphaelus in the act of opening a giant goose egg to fry it in an iron skillet of six yards' span. Fabulinus interrupted the action with these words; 'Here it becomes necessary to recount to you the history of the world up to this point.' Surely no one needs to be told that Atrix Fabulinus is really Raphael Aloysius Lafferty. (Although perhaps I should remind you that "goose egg" means "zero," and that Helen of Troy was hatched from a swan's egg.)

Lafferty is—as you would certainly have guessed without me—one of the seven scribbling giants who write the world. That, I know, sounds like one of the world's tallest tales; and it is, because plain truth, even when it is a homely and humble truth, always stands head-and-shoulders above a lie. Thanks to Niels Bohr, it has become a commonplace of physics that observation changes the thing observed—we merely pretend that it does not. Our objections to Lafferty (like our objections to Borges and Bohr) nearly always boil down to a protest that he will not play with us; and the truth is that he is too playful to play with us—our game is too dull for him. He would rather play in that most fantastical world in which some of the animals wear three-piece suits, the world called Terra, that is as wild and lonely as any other a star.

Thoreau said, "I do not know how to distinguish between our waking life and a dream. Are we not always living the life that we imagine we are?" Lafferty is one of those rare writers who has imagined waking. ■



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"Where do you get your ideas?" Doubtless all writers hear that, over and over. If they write SF, it is apt to take the form "Where do you get those crazy ideas?" I am told that Harlan Ellison has gotten so fed up with it that now he replies, "From a little old man in Schenectady. I pay him to mail me one every week." Or words to that effect.

Myself, I just think about something else or watch any pretty girls who are nearby while a conditioned reflex says, "Anywhere and everywhere. If you have that kind of mind, anything whatsoever can suggest a story. What's important is not getting the idea, it's what you do with it."

Still, you might find an account of a few cases entertaining. My colleagues would have their own tales to tell, which I'd very much like to hear, but since I can't speak for them, a certain incidence of the vertical pronoun becomes inevitable. These instances aren't meant for brags, they're merely anecdotes.

A gimmick seldom generates a story by itself. My files are full of notions waiting for something else to come along that will touch off the peculiar chemistry. However, on occasion a single concept or thought has sufficed. This was not infrequent back in the heyday of John Campbell's editorship, when much SF amounted to a game of association. A story would put forth a new idea or a new angle on an old one; somebody else would develop this further, or try to refute it, in another story; third and fourth parties would jump in—lots of fun, up to the point where all the juice had been squeezed out. Then, too often, the hacks took over the husk.

I loved Doc Smith's *Lensman* stories. Literarily they may not quite have equaled the works of Henry James, but they were not only enjoyable, they had opened a whole new realm, civilization and conflict on a galactic scale among multitudes of diverse intelligent species. This may be a cliché today, but at the time it was a great development as *Robinson Crusoe* had been in the "mainstream." Like the latter, it produced an entire category of narratives and, less directly but more importantly, influenced almost everything of any kind that followed it.

Still, I got to wondering if you really could or should keep the peace with planet-smashing weapons. World War II and its destructions were not long past; the memories of it had not yet scarred over. If, instead, the Nazi movement had been nipped in the bud—if somehow the Japanese militarists had been subverted before they embarked on their conquests—if there were some way to quietly undermine Stalin—and thus I wrote "The Double-Dyed Villains." (1949) In this, a Galactic Patrol did indeed maintain a navy, but only for show. Its top secret was that its agents must never, under any circumstances, kill; violence can too easily get out of hand. They were, though, allowed any other means, such as bribery, blackmail, slander, corruption....

The story is forgotten now, which is just as well, because the writing was pretty amateurish. I was barely starting. Nevertheless, in its day it created a small sensation, and I think it was at least influential in the genesis of a theme that became ubiquitous, Machiavellian do-gooders subtly manipulating things behind the scenes.

BEER-MUTTERINGS



POUL ANDERSON

That didn't take long to become stale. At last, sick and tired of it, I wrote "No Truce With Kings," (1963) in which the Machiavellian do-gooders get a comeuppance that, a character argues, is richly deserved. A reading of history had given me an impression that feudalism, in one guise or another, may well be the ground state of civilization, to which it always reverts. I threw this in too, with the suggestion that it is not necessarily regrettable. Some readers expressed disagreement or indignation, but the story won me my first Hugo.

The catalyst had been a request to write something that would fit a cover painting of a bowman watching a spaceship lift off. Pondering how such a juxtaposition might come about led me to visualize a seemingly collapsed society which officious outsiders were trying to elevate. In such wise I found the playground for the two motifs that had been at the back of my mind.

It was common practice in the old days for an artist who had no other work on hand at the moment to dash off a cover picture, tossing together any elements that occurred to him. He'd sell it, and the editor would commission somebody to write a story including the scene. This does not mean the story was bound to be a piece of hackwork. Not uncommonly, the challenge to make sense of obvious absurdities forced the writer to think so hard that s/he did extra well. The 1967 novella that I later revised and expanded into the novel *Tau Zero* had such an origin.

Indeed, once when I was in a mood to write a short story but nothing in the files appealed, I asked Karen, "Tell me a cover." She thought for a moment, then said, "A man's sitting at a desk, swamped with work. A robot's sitting in a chair beside him, smelling a rose." I think "The Critique of Impure Reason" (1962) is among my better humorous pieces.

Recently, perhaps as an exercise in

nostalgia, Robert Silverberg and Martin Greenberg have been assembling a book of new stories written in this way, around a picture by Vincent di Fate. It shows what appears to be a scene on a moon of Saturn; at any rate, a ringed planet is in a black sky. In the foreground, what appears to be an empty coverall is hung up, with something on top that can't really be a space helmet. The invitation was irresistible. I don't yet know what other contributors did, and look forward to finding out. Myself, I took measurements, on that basis estimated angular diameters, and concluded that this was either Titan or Hyperion. Since the former has a thick, cloudy atmosphere, it must be the latter, the rotation of which has been shown to be chaotic. Well, chaos is very much in the scientific news these days. Why not base a story on it? I rather like "Scarecrow," and hope you will.

John Campbell was a fountainhead of ideas. He gave them away freely and never afterward claimed credit. Occasionally the authors have acknowledged the debt—for example, Isaac Asimov as regards "Nightfall," the laws of robotics, and the Foundation series. (The latter two were embryonically in his own head, but the editor pointed out to him what they really implied.) Campbell's gifts of this kind to me were many. Some still lie among my notes; the complementary notion that will make a story has never arrived. Eventually it may. Of those that have seen light, here I'll only mention two. One was that colonists in the Solar System won't bother with the planets, when resources are so much more readily available in the asteroids and the gravity wells are so much shallower. The other was that important materials can be scooped out of the atmosphere of Jupiter. These led to the series that saw book publication as *Tales of the Flying Mountains* (1970). Today both suggestions are being seriously discussed by engineers and others professionally concerned with astronautics. These people may have had the thoughts quite independently. If, though, my book has influenced them at all, the honor belongs to John Campbell.

Once I but a bee in his bonnet. That proved unfortunate. In *The Long Way Home* (1955) an intelligent, educated slave in a far future society tells an approximately 20th-century American that her condition isn't bad, and asks him exactly how free he thinks he is. As far as I was concerned, this was just a touch of characterization; I'm an Abolitionist from way back. But perhaps merely because he loved to stir up the animals, Campbell developed the argument in an editorial or two; the hacks seized upon it; and we got a spate of dismal theses in favor of slavery.

Sheerly random things can touch off a story. Once I saw a newspaper headline, PEACE LOOMS IN STEEL STRIKE, which suggested some not altogether unbelievable developments in the near future leading to a world in which all societies need war for their smooth functioning. "The Peacemongers" (1957) was trivial, but the gimmick amused readers at the time. On the other hand, for years I wanted to write of a world in which Shakespeare's plays had been word-for-word historical fact. No plot would come to mind—till Karen chanced upon a novel about Prince Rupert of the Rhine and told

-----continued on page 30

One fateful afternoon in 1988, I got a phone call from Bruce Coville, then chairman of the Nebula Awards Jury. He introduced himself and proceeded to ask the big one.

"You'd like me to what?" I remember saying.

"Serve on the Nebula Jury," he replied in a kindly and persuasive voice.

"The what?" I felt stupefied.

"The Nebula Jury," he said with emphasis.

I had been in the Science Fiction Writers of America for five or six years, and had heard of the Nebula Jury, but never paid much attention to it. I thought of the Nebulas mainly in terms of how my colleagues and I in the vast masses of the active membership would vote, based on recommendations appearing in the Nebula Awards Report.

"Look," he said, and now he sounded very kind indeed. "You don't have to decide right away. You can sleep on it, and I'll give you the names of some former jurors you can call if you want to find out what it's like."

I made a few telephone calls. Karen Joy Fowler said the Nebula Jury's task was impossible to perform well and fairly, that it had had a terrible effect on her writing, and that she would never do it again as long as she lived, even if they paid her. The morsels were almost gone when I finished talking to her.

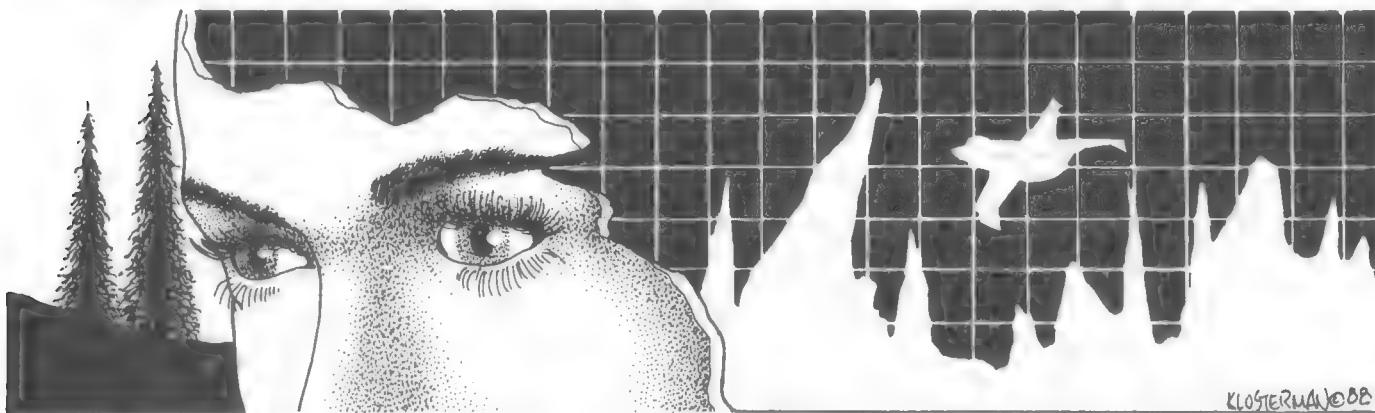
Bruce Boston, on the other hand, told me it was hard work but extremely rewarding. "You'll get to compare notes with some of the finest writers in the field. Besides, you'll get hundreds of free books. They'll just come to the door in boxes, day after day." This argument I found impossible to

with its effects.

The largest effect of all was that I read constantly. I discovered, for example, that one can finish twenty pages of an Ace Special in the time it takes to cook an artichoke; that, given a clear plastic freezer bag and an all-weather trouble light, it is possible to devour a longish short story while showering; that a Eureka 4-horse vacuum cleaner can be fitted with a serviceable book stand made of heavy-duty coat hangers.

In the course of all this reading, a few facts became clear to me. I don't mean just clear. I mean *horribly* clear, like a microscopic view of the pores on an average nose. One is that the Nebula rules are in a laughable state. A related point is that the Nebula finalists do not, as I always dreamed they did, necessarily represent the finest work published in the genre.

THE YEAR OF READING FRANTICLY



by Nancy Etchemendy

"But what would we have to *do*?" I asked.

"Well, basically, we're supposed to read everything published this year which could possibly be considered part of the genre, and then, if we want, add to the ballot one terrific work in each category."

"Oh," I said—a way of buying time while I considered the figures I'd seen in a recent issue of *Locus*. The previous year, over 800 original volumes of science fiction, fantasy, and horror had been published. This number excluded all but a few of the year's short stories and most works which could not clearly be considered speculative. (In this article, I'll be throwing the term "speculative fiction" around a lot. I define it, idiosyncratically perhaps, as the set containing science fiction, horror, fantasy—both historical and contemporary—and all that other weird stuff which nobody has thought of a name for yet.)

I popped a handful of Nestlé's semi-sweet morsels as the immensity of the task began to dawn on me. "Uh, how many people on the jury?"

"Seven," said Bruce. And he read off a list of the other jurors, all wonderful writers.

It did sound exciting. But let's see. Eight hundred divided by seven...I reached for the semi-sweet morsels again.

resist, since if there is anything in the world that brings out my basic weaknesses more reliably than Nestlé's semi-sweet morsels, it's books.

So, without sleeping on it (I was so full of chocolate by then I couldn't possibly have slept anyway), I called Bruce Coville and agreed to sit on the 1988 Nebula Awards Jury. My fate and the shape of the year to come were thereby sealed.

It was true. Like stray cats, books appeared at my door every day. When they didn't arrive in cartons, they arrived in fat Jiffy bags, jammed into an increasingly rickety mail box. Some came from editors or marketing managers, complete with solicitous letters. Some came directly from hopeful authors. Others came in odd-sized packages from the SFWA Circulating Book Plan. A few were even delivered by Federal Express. And there were magazines, too.

I stacked this printed material by armloads on every flat surface in the house, including at times the toilet lids and the toaster. I built new interior walls out of it—risky in earthquake country, but visually powerful. And I fended off daily hailstorms of complaints from members of the family who had not volunteered to be on the Nebula Jury, but were nevertheless living

For those of you who aren't familiar with the Nebula process, here's Etchemendy's patented capsule summary. The Nebulas are awarded annually—one in each of four lengths: short story, novelette, novella, and novel. The Nebula Award year is the same as the calendar year. Everything published between January 1, 1988 and December 31, 1988 was eligible for the 1988 Nebulas. The case will be similar for the 1989 awards. Authors and publishers do not have to submit works for consideration. All fiction published in the U.S. for the first time during a given year is automatically qualified. (The rules have nothing to say on the subject of genre, so technically, works don't even have to be speculative. Which may be a good thing, since everyone seems to have a different idea of what constitutes speculative fiction and what does not.) Active members of SFWA, currently about 750 people, can recommend as many works as they like during the year. Within a day or two after the end of the year, recommendations are closed and counted. Any work which has received five or more recommendations is then placed on the preliminary ballot, which is mailed out to the membership by the 10th of January. Members are given a month during which to mark their preliminary ballots. These results are tabulated, and the

five works in each length category which receive the most votes are placed on the final ballot. At this point, the Nebula jury can add one candidate in each category, or not, as they see fit. Members get another month to do their final voting after they receive their final ballots. All the voting is generally finished by mid-March of the year following the Nebula year. The winners, one in each category, are arrived at through the truly tangled (but presumably most fair) "Australian ballot" method.

Since the award is voted on by the active membership as a whole, the process is heavily skewed in favor of inexpensive mass-market publications (because they are easy for large numbers of people to procure) and works published early in the year (though authors who ain't proud can withdraw late-year or low-circulation works "in favor of a later edition," which in most cases has come to mean "in favor of a paperback edition"). It's also heavily skewed in favor of works that almost anybody can like, that is, works that are more or less inoffensive. This last point seems to be just as it should, until one examines the number of beautifully written, important works that never get near the preliminary ballot simply because they have unpopular or unpleasant things to say.

One of the jury's tasks is to help right these wrongs by considering works that are handicapped by the nature of the process. A few shining examples from 1988 are *Fool on the Hill* by Matt Ruff (overlooked because it was a hardback first novel brought out by a specialty publisher, the Atlantic Press); *Fade* by Robert Cormier and *The Devil's Arithmetic* by Jane Yolen (both hardbacks marketed as children's books); *Antibodies* by David Skal and this year's *Geek Love* by Katherine Dunn (both hardbacks, wonderfully crafted and poignant, but addressing subjects and viewpoints which some readers find off-putting); *The New Dinosaurs* by Dougal Dixon (an expensive, lavishly illustrated book from Salam Press which left many readers at a loss simply because it was not presented in a traditional fiction format); R.A. MacAvoy's hilarious story "Katsuri Ishiba and the Brother-in-law of the Dalai Lama," published in Issue 3 of *Per Ardua Ad Astra*, and a gritty, moving piece by David Schow, untitled, which appeared in the June issue of *Midnight Graffiti* (lost in the dust because they were published in places most members had never heard of); not to mention Barbara Hambly's book *Those Who Hunt the Night*, several others like it, and the entire contents of *Pulphouse Hardback Magazine*, Issue 2 (published late in December, with an effective eligibility period of two weeks).

In other words, it's the jury's job to read the jillions of works that come from small or specialty presses; or which appear in hardback only; or are published in magazines most speculative fiction writers consider too icky, juvenile or mundane to subscribe to, like the *New Yorker*, *Boy's Life*, and *Redbook*; or are brought out in December, just a few weeks before the preliminary ballot appears. The trouble is that a committee of seven people simply can't read fast enough to consider everything that fits the description above, let alone everything else published in the genre.

Jury selections that fit the description above never win Nebulas anyway, because

placing them on the final ballot doesn't make them any easier to obtain than they were in the first place. Having obscure and late-year works on the ballot is good for SFWA's image since it heightens the general appearance that we're covering all the bases, and it's usually beneficial for the writer. But the fact remains, some of the best work in the genre has no prayer of winning a Nebula simply because it is published in the wrong place or in the wrong form or at the wrong time of year. (To be fair, I should point out that SFWA is now in the midst of a struggle to overcome some of these inequities. I hope we succeed, but it's a lot like trying to change the course of a robot hippopotamus controlled by an extremely baroque piece of software.)

Now, these are fightin' words, and are likely to get me into enough trouble all by themselves. Yet I am driven in a deeply demented way to make things even worse by mentioning something else, something beside which the other points seem like peanuts, something which is *really* likely to make the spinach hit the Cuisinart, so to speak. It's particularly upsetting because I had previously believed it to be imaginary. It has to do with trash—and mountain climbing.

Climbing a mountain, whether it is made of stone or of words, is a demanding feat of endurance and courage. Word mountains are nicer than stone mountains in that they aren't as likely to kill you for trying to conquer them. Word mountains merely maim you and leave you at their feet in a philosophical frame of mind. What bothered me about scaling the mountain of words I received last year was that on a surprisingly large number of occasions I would rather have sliced my rope than finished reading a particular book or story. (My best estimate is that 750 books found their way into my house last year, some purchased, some from SFWA's Circulating Book Plan, most supplied by publishers. In addition, I received free subscriptions to eight magazines. It's true I never sliced my rope. After all, I'm still here, aren't I? I simply didn't oblige myself to finish trash, which means that about 650 of those books have endings which will remain forever mysterious to me. But more about that later.) How could I feel this way? After all, I love speculative fiction. It's a mirror for the way my own brain works, which is probably why I write it. The answer? Sorry, Virginia, there really is trashy speculative fiction out there. And I don't mean just a little. I mean a lot.

Perhaps the most valuable thing I learned during my year of comparing literary tastes with six articulate, persuasive, and opinionated writers is that, owing to the natures of art and of human individuality, the only objective distinction to be made in discussions of literary quality is as follows: is it trash, or is it not trash? If it is trash, then everyone agrees, sometimes even the author. If it is not trash, then everything else said about it is just one person's opinion. Yours may be the same as mine, and it may not.

Are my own standards impossibly high and elitist? I don't think so. My definition of trash goes like this: if I could, without shedding a tear, use it to light a stove on a cool autumn evening, then it's trash. If I would rather be reading a come-on from an insurance company, then it's trash. If I find myself

daydreaming crabbily about the tree that died to produce it, then it's trash.

Last year I filled a smallish infinity of cartons with books and stories so uninspired, so uninformed, so boring, and in some cases so subliterary, that the only person who would take them off my hands was my brother-in-law, who spends most of his time trapped on a ship in the middle of the Pacific Ocean with very little to do except wait for something to go wrong. (Don't ask. It's a very long story.)

I do not say such things because I lack commitment to the field. As a matter of fact, I have done considerable trudging from school to school, library to library, trying to convince the people in charge that it is criminal to simply dismiss "sci-fi" as worthless garbage. I can't tell you how many times I have explained to teachers with hard looks on their faces that Sturgeon's Law applies to *everything*. (You remember Sturgeon's Law? 90% of everything is crap?) "Yes, Ms. Muhlmán. If you go to your local bookstore and look around the shelves, you will find that 90% of the mainstream fiction you find there is doo-doo. Yet you wouldn't dismiss all of mainstream fiction on that basis." Ms. Muhlmán usually nods sagely at this point. I autograph a few copies of *Revolt of the Rabbittoids* for her class, and I leave feeling virtuous and triumphant, somewhat like a Jehovah's Witness who has had a fruitful encounter.

I have always realized there is chaff among the grain in speculative fiction, as there is in every other field of writing. But until last year, I didn't really believe that 90% figure. Recently, I have noticed that I can go to the *fiction* shelf at my favorite bookstore, select any book at random, and more likely than not, find it to be at least literate and engaging. I may not like it, but I wouldn't be willing to burn it. The same tactic at the *science fiction* shelf, however, is likely to glean an armful of stuff that makes me wish I had gone to the video rental store instead. The phenomenon seems to be worse for novels than for short fiction. Virtually all the fiction in the major SF magazines is readable. (Specifically, I'm talking about *Fantasy & Science Fiction*, *Asimov's*, *Omni*, *Amazing*, *Weird Tales*, and to a lesser degree, *Analog*. For 1988, this list should also include *Twilight Zone*, which, unfortunately for us all, is no longer being published.) Most of it is quite good. And there are a fair number of excellent anthologies and collections published each year as well. Bantam's *Full Spectrum* volumes, George Zebrowski's *Synergy* series, and the new quarterly *Pulphouse* are just a few examples. It's a much different case for novels, though, and particularly for paperback originals.

I swore when I started my Nebula reading that I would try to be unbiased and even-handed. But by the end of the year, when I couldn't even get up to go to the bathroom at night without stubbing my toe on somebody's novel, I found myself making dreadfully irascible decisions about what deserved my time and what did not. In September as I recall, I stopped requiring myself to read beyond the first 50 pages of a book if they contained 1) repeated inadvertent abuses of English grammar, 2) inconsistent details of plot, setting, or characterization, 3) gaping holes in story logic, 4) unbelievably powerful, egotistical, or ignorant

characters, 5) bad science, or 6) nonsense.

Along about November, certain trends were beginning to wear very thin, and I stopped reading 1) books whose publishers summarized them as sprawling novels of intergalactic war and true love, 2) books whose publishers summarized them as sweeping novels of heroic fantasy in the tradition of X (replace X with the name of a stellar fantasist, preferably Marion Zimmer Bradley), 3) books which were number Y in a series, where $Y > 3$, and 4) books whose covers featured quotations like, "One of the most interesting novels I have read this year." I waived these guidelines only in special cases—like when someone I trusted said I just had to read this book.

Sometime around December, I began setting books aside based on their titles and subtitles. There are really two separate cases here. One is books by up-and-coming young authors writing "in the worlds of" established big namers—Asimov and Silverberg, for example. These books began to seriously depress me. Though they can be well and even lovingly written, they are intrinsically less fresh than wholly original novels. In the hands of a fine craftsman who, for one reason or another, can afford to be more concerned about quality than about hourly pay, they can rise above the level of sheer entertainment. But this is the exception rather than the rule. An appalling percentage of "in the worlds of" books seem quickly and even carelessly written. Most are blandly unedifying adventure stories.

The other case is books with lackluster, clichéd, or simply unimaginative titles. At first, I felt terrible about the idea of deciding not to read a book merely on the basis of its title. I fought this urge until quite late in the game, and would readily waive the rule of thumb given a good word from an informed reader or reviewer. After all, sometimes bad titles are foisted on helpless authors by the crass marketing departments of large publishers. I've had it happen myself. ("You can't possibly call this book 'Osmyrrah.' No one will be able to pronounce it. How about something simpler, like 'The Crystal City?') Still, the correlation was definitely there. Books with uninspired titles were likely to contain uninspired stories. On the other hand, books with powerful, catchy titles were almost always good. (One notable exception, a wretched and infuriating bit of work, was *The Singing*, by Theron Raines. Absolutely terrific title, and truly poetic prose, but riddled with inconsistencies, large loose ends, and rotten science. The infuriating part was that at least one heavyweight mainstream reviewer loved this book, and seemed to feel that it was serious science fiction, something I'm sure she previously considered a contradiction in terms.) Consider some of the best titles (and books) of 1988: *Becoming Alien*, by Rebecca Ore; *Neverness*, by David Zindell; *Drowning Towers*, by George Turner; *Twice Upon a Time*, by Allen Appel; *Walkabout Woman*, by Michaela Roessner. These are books whose titles simply make you itch to read them, and they do not disappoint.

In the end (around the last week of January), I was so overwhelmed with reading demands that I resorted to tossing out anything from Baen Books. On the face of it, this seems horribly arbitrary and unfair—especially in light of the fact that a

Baen book, Lois McMaster Bujold's *Falling Free*, won a 1988 Nebula. But the terrible truth is that I received more books from Baen than from any other publisher, and I didn't care for a single one (even *Falling Free*, which although it is good, was not one of my favorites). Maybe it's because Baen tends to publish idea-oriented science fiction, series books, and high fantasy. Within these boundaries, it's difficult (not impossible) to build a novel which is excellent in every dimension, and that is what we were looking for as Nebula jurors. The 1988 Baen book that came closest to winning me over was *Orphan of Creation*, by Roger MacBride Allen, a book that combines believable, quirky characters with poignant situations and a great science fiction idea. Its only serious downfall is the quality of its prose, which is generally undistinguished and even contrived in places. Most of the Baen books I received last year got the ax after the first 50 pages. Which brings us back to the subject at hand.

I can say from experience that it's not easy for a beginning writer to get published. Heaven only knows how many quarts of disgusting bodily fluids I've expended in the struggle to make my work good enough so editors would consider buying it. Under such circumstances, how does trash ever see the light of day?

It's surely not the fault of editors, who are in any case not the highest authorities in most publishing ventures. Where educated, experienced editors do have ultimate power over content—notably the major magazines, some anthologies, and the few publishing houses still owned by people with a genuine love for the written word—trash is almost nonexistent.

Oddly, (or maybe not so oddly, since I am one myself), I don't think it's the fault of writers either. This seems counter-intuitive, because it's obvious that there would be no trashy fiction of any kind if writers simply didn't write it. But in this real and imperfect world, writers do produce trash. Many writers, especially beginners, simply can't tell when their work is bad. They may suspect it, but it doesn't take much to convince them they are wrong. (A kindly word from a neighbor or a lover will usually do the trick.) This is why good editors are a necessity. However, there are writers accomplished and professional enough to know exactly when they are producing trash, and they seem to be doing it anyway, quite consciously, and in droves. Why? There are several different theories about this, but they all involve money. One writer friend of mine summed it up this way: "A packager will pay me the same amount of money for a book I could write in four weeks as a mainstream publisher would pay for a book that might take four months. That four-month book might live longer, and indeed make considerably more money over an extended period of time. Unfortunately, neither my landlord nor my local grocery are interested in supporting literature by deferring my bills against some golden future."

In the last twenty years or so, the publishing industry has been transformed from a labor largely of love—in which the primary motive was to make a lasting contribution to literature—into a labor largely (and I do mean largely) of conglomerates. Virtually all of the mass-market publishing houses are

now owned by huge corporations. Some of these are media conglomerates (as in the case of Time-Warner) and some are giant organizations lusting after publishing ownership for tax purposes, or because they've heard there's a lot of money to be made in best-sellers, or in order to "diversify." (Personally, I'm waiting for one of the big tobacco companies to get tired of buying airlines and food companies and decide that, since there's less and less money in nicotine and carcinogens these days, they ought to try books.)

Large corporations, and particularly large American and European corporations, have a few dismal qualities in common. The one of most interest to us as inquiring readers is lack of vision. Considering the fact that this country was settled by a naturally selected pool of wayward adventurers anxious to get rich quick, I suppose it's understandable that the quarterly profit-and-loss statement is the guiding light of corporate America. (I don't know what the Europeans' excuse is.) I suppose it's also understandable that our great universities have continued the tradition by imbuing student CEO's with that historic reverence for the here and now. Understandable maybe, but that doesn't make it any less disgusting.

Take-the-money-and-run. The results lie all around us, and they're not pretty. In the last two centuries, we have eaten our way through one of the richest concentrations of natural resources in the world and may soon have nothing to show for it except dead forests, toxic garbage dumps, and the greenhouse effect. To see similar practices applied to another of our great resources, this country's vibrant and varied literature, is heartbreaking.

The speculative fiction genre is particularly vulnerable because it is fairly young, and is still relegated primarily to mass-market formats. It is not seen as a national treasure, one worthy of vigilance by informed readers, reviewers, librarians, and teachers. Those who would fight tooth and nail to preserve the integrity of Flannery O'Connor and William Faulkner, have not yet discovered Ursula Le Guin and Samuel Delany, who are no less worthy.

The business school wizards who have recently been put in charge of publishing are not interested in the ten or fifteen year investment required to develop a promising new writer. They are interested in sure bets for immediate profits—stuff they know Waldenbooks and B. Dalton's will buy, which, given the central purchasing policies of these chains, means work that can't possibly offend anybody. How to achieve that? Produce more of what we know has already succeeded. Space war adventures and medieval fantasies have always sold well. Let's get some more out there. Sequels to books that have been best-sellers, too. We can't lose with them. If the old authors can't write fast enough themselves, well hire some young ones to do it for them. Sure, we'll publish new names, but only if you can prove to us they're the hottest thing since Frank Herbert. How? Well, read it and ask yourself, is it anything like *Dune*?

As you can probably tell, a year on the Nebula jury has left me wallowing in a sort of malaise. Remember that time when you
-----continued on page 30

In *THRUST 32*, Mike Resnick made an offhand statement that caught my attention and brought to mind a concern that I've had with science fiction for quite some time.

The fact is that science fiction writers usually don't fully realize that they are writing fantasy stories, whereas fantasy writers usually do. This makes science fiction a particularly dangerous form of fantasy, as it often spreads unrealistic fairy tales about the future which both readers and writers half believe.

This struck me as particularly ironic back when Charles Platt and Piers Anthony were arguing in *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine* about which was better, science fiction or fantasy. It never seemed to dawn on Piers that all of the accusations that Charles was making about fantasy were also true for science fiction. Thus Piers was reduced to mild defensive statements about the lines of, "Well, everyone needs to escape once in a while" (all the time seems more like it to me), and never once grasped the fact that that's what science fiction readers were doing too. In fact, it never seemed to occur to him to attack science fiction at all, so Charles sort of won by default.

Anyway, the statement by Resnick that brought all this back to mind was when, mulling over the same area, he said: "Admittedly, if you don't believe we can beat the speed of light, then just about everything I write is fantasy! (laughs)" (Laughs?) Is whether we can beat the speed of light or not something open to belief? Perhaps we should go to the library and check it out. We might be drawn to *The Universe and Dr. Einstein* by Lincoln Barnett. After all, it has a foreword by Albert Einstein wherein he says: "The main ideas of the theory of relativity are extremely well presented." The index would quickly lead us to page 51, where we would read:

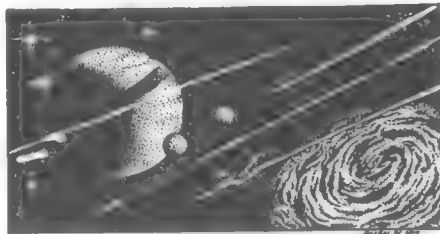
"The laws governing these contractions are defined by the Lorentz transformation and they are very simple: the greater the speed, the greater the contraction. A yardstick moving with 90 per cent the velocity of light would shrink to about half its length; thereafter the rate of contraction becomes more rapid; and if the stick could attain the velocity of light, it would shrink away to nothing at all. Similarly a clock traveling with the velocity of light would stop completely. From this it follows that nothing can ever move faster than light, no matter what forces are applied. Thus Relativity reveals another fundamental law of nature: *the velocity of light is the top limiting velocity in the universe.*"

And on to page 56, where we would find:

$$m = \frac{m_0}{\sqrt{1 - v^2/c^2}}$$

"Here m stands for the mass of a body moving with velocity v , m_0 for its mass when at rest, and c for the velocity of light. anyone who has ever studied elementary algebra can readily see that if v is small, as are all the velocities of ordinary experience, then the difference between m and m_0 is practically zero. But when v approaches the value of c then the increase of mass becomes very great, reaching infinity when the velocity of the moving body reaches the velocity of light. Since a body of infinite mass would offer infinite resistance to motion the conclu-

SPACED OUT?



Ronald Anthony Cross

sion is once again reached that no material body can travel with the speed of light."

On the other hand, if we were modest of our scientific knowledge, we would probably head for the children's section, where we would doubtlessly be drawn to Isaac Asimov's *How Did We Find Out About the Speed of Light?* Here we would find, on page 52:

"Einstein's theory also made it necessary to conclude that nothing made of matter could go faster than light under any conditions. Nor could any messages ever go faster than the speed of light.

"The speed of light, which had till then been looked at as just an interesting figure no different from any other speed, suddenly became a universal speed limit that no one could break."

And on pages 54-56:

"If human beings continue to learn how to go faster and faster, can they someday get to the nearest star in three days?

"No! Human beings can't get to the nearest star in less than 4.27 years, or make a round trip in less than 8.54 years, *no matter what.*

"We can't get to the star, Rigel, in less than 815 years or make a round trip in less than 1,630 years, *no matter what!* And if your descendants finally reach Rigel and send a message to Earth that they have arrived, that message will take 815 years to get to Earth, and it will take another 815 years to get a reply, *no matter what.*

"We can't get to the center of the Galaxy in less than 25,000 years, or to the Andromeda galaxy in less than 2,300,000 years, or to the nearest quasar in less than 1,000,000,000 years."

But to this knowledge of what the theory of relativity actually says, we need to add knowledge about just how accurate and reliable it is. Pages 51-52 of Asimov's book would tell us:

"Einstein showed, however, that if light acts the way he thought it should, then all sorts of deductions could be made about how the world ought to behave and how experiments ought to work out. He worked out those deductions and it turned out that those deductions were correct.

"Since 1905, scientists have made thousands upon thousands of careful observations of how things behave and work, and they've conducted thousands upon thousands of experiments. Every single one of those observations and experiments backs up Einstein's theory.

"Nowadays, all scientists accept the

theory as an accurate description of the Universe."

Or, as *The Universe and Dr. Einstein*, pages 56-57, would put it:

"Of all aspects of Relativity the principle on increase of mass has been most often verified and most fruitfully applied by experimental physicists. Electrons moving in powerful electrical fields and beta particles ejected from the nuclei of radioactive substances attain velocities ranging up to 99 per cent that of light. For atomic physicists concerned with these great speeds, the increase of mass predicted by Relativity is no arguable theory but an empirical fact their calculations cannot ignore. In fact the mechanics of the proton-synchrotron and other new super-energy machines must be designed to allow for the increasing mass of particles as their speed approaches the velocity of light, in order to make them operate at all."

No, I'm afraid the appropriate way to think in this area is that according to the laws of physics, speed-of-light travel is impossible. This has apparently been proved. In fact, space travel stories nowadays serve about the same purpose that flat earth societies did back when the learned knew that the earth wasn't flat, but the common man was still having difficulty assimilating the info into daily life.

Alas, we are not going to beat it, beat Einstein, or even (sigh) beat the universe. But what we are probably going to do in the future is continue to beat our wives, our children and each other (or are we?), if you get where I'm coming from here.

And besides, what's with this feverish desire to spread out and infest the universe like a virus? (Perhaps we want to teach the ET's wife beating and the arts of war?) There's only one true answer. Escape. But a more intense desire to escape than you'll find in any fantasy reader. Because, of course, it must be *realistic* escape.

It was just this sort of *realistic* thinking that led me to the idea for my novel *Prisoners of Paradise*. After being told by an editor that science fiction wasn't just stories about the future, but that it was a form of *realism* inextricably bound up with space travel, and furthermore it had to be optimistic, the thought which immediately entered my mind was, according to my experience with human nature, future man will be far more likely to build a huge luxury resort hotel, go inside of it, and never come out: the exact opposite of space travel. The idea to write a real anti-space fiction novel and sell it to a science fiction editor appealed to me. It only took me a little more than ten years to sell it, but who knows, maybe I'll get an anti-Nebula award for it.

Which brings me back to the point of all this. Most science fiction is a limited form of fantasy (it takes place in an alternate universe where E doesn't equal mc squared) written for people who don't just want to escape, but who want to get clear the hell out of the solar system. Furthermore, they want to be convinced by experts that this is a realistic possibility. It is not only fantasy, but it is mostly silly, because it's fantasy which takes itself seriously. Thus it is only appropriate that, more than any other form of literature I know, it tends to regard humor with suspicion. I guess it's already funny enough. ■

NEBULA AWARDS 24: SFWA'S CHOICES FOR THE BEST SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY 1988, ed. by Michael Bishop (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1990, 302 pp., \$13.95/\$22.95; ISBN 0-15-164932-4)

Reviewed by Doug Fratz

The Nebula Awards anthology has for some years now been at a decided tactical disadvantage in competing with the other best-of-the-year volumes, coming out as it does six to ten months after all the others, and from a non-SF-oriented hardcover publisher to boot. By the time the Nebula volume comes out, the SF world is focused on the next year's SF works.

Michael Bishop is the latest editor grappling with this problem. I am pleased to report that he has been more than a little successful in making the 1988 volume a valuable coda to the year—primarily through the use of two strategies.

First, Bishop has chosen to include primarily less known stories—fiction overlooked by the other best-of-the-year anthologies chronicling 1988. The only widely printed stories in this volume are Connie Willis' "The Last of the Winnebagos" and George Alec Effinger's "Schrödinger's Kitten," winners of the Nebula in the novella and novelette categories, and were therefore nondiscretionary selections.

"Bible Stories for Adults, No. 17: The Deluge" by James Morrow, a delightfully irreverent story that shows the New Wave is not really quite dead, was the Nebula winner in the short story category. Although it too was a mandatory choice, it is otherwise very typical of the stories Bishop chose: it appeared in none of the other books, wasn't nominated for the Hugo Award, and in fact didn't even place among the top 34 short stories in the 1988 *Locus* poll.

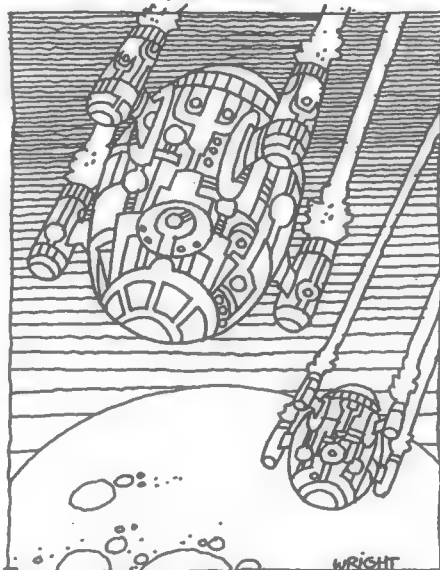
Bishop also includes a long excerpt from Jane Yolen's chilling and controversial novella-length children's book on the Holocaust, "The Devil's Arithmetic," another work that didn't even place in the *Locus* Poll, never mind the anthologies and awards. Jack McDevitt's "The Fort Moxie Branch" was the only story to be nominated for both a Hugo and a Nebula to fail to appear in any of the previous best-of-the-years. Neal Barrett, Jr.'s "antic "Ginny Sweethip's Flying Circus," another a Hugo and Nebula nominee, was included in Dozois' book. Most obscure of all of Bishop's inclusions is Gene Wolfe's thriller (and only story in the volume set in deep space; Bishop obviously prefers the emotionally engaging soft kind of SF that he himself writes), "The Other Dead Man," which not only wasn't chosen for any of the other anthologies, it didn't even make the final Nebula ballot.

Although these selections do make the book's subtitle a bit questionable, every one of these stories was worthy of inclusion. (Superbly crafted, no-nuts-and-bolts, soft SF had another good year in 1988.)

Bishop's second strategy to compensate for the lateness of this volume was to include a remarkable array of non-fiction. In addition to Ian Watson's excellent review of the year's SF (which was preprinted in *THRUST* 35), there is a short article Lois McMaster Bujold on the writing of her Nebula-winning novel, *Falling Free*, Greg Bear's glowing tribute to Ray Bradbury, a brief article by Bradbury himself on censor-

REVIEWS

BOOKS, ETC.



ship, tributes to Clifford Simak (by Gordon Dickson) and Robert Heinlein (by Frank M. Robinson), Paul Di Filippo on the genius of Dr. Seuss (only *slightly* tongue-in-cheek), and Bill Warren on the (mostly pathetic) SF movies of 1988. It is a truly impressive and unexpected array.

If you happen to be one of those who have been ignoring the annual Nebula anthology of late, it may be time to stop and take one more look back at the SF of 1988.

PULPHOUSE—THE HARDBACK MAGAZINE: ISSUE 4, ed. by Kristine Kathryn Rusch (Pulphouse Publishing, 1989, 247pp., \$17.95)

Reviewed by Richard Weilgosh

Pulphouse, a highly successful small press publication considering that its print run is only 1250 copies, has been around one year. The first in the **Pulphouse** series was the Fall, 1988, Horror issue, followed by the Speculative Fiction issue in Winter, 1988, a Spring 1989 collection of Fantasy stories, followed by the present Science Fiction issue.

The fourth issue carries on the tradition of outstanding writing. Of the twenty stories in the Summer, 1989, **Pulphouse**, seventeen are original with this publication and the other three are reprints with two of those being non-fiction by Jack Williamson and Jon Gustafson. The major authors in this issue include Jack Williamson, Algis Budrys, Damon Knight, and Robert Sheckley, who

contributes a new story. Several of the other authors on the brink of becoming household names are: Bruce Boston, Nancy Etchemendy, Kevin J. Anderson, Kevin O'Donnell, Jr., and Nini Kiriki Hoffman.

Despite the designation of this as the SF issue, most of these stories contain elements of SF, Fantasy and Horror mixed together. The introductions to each of the stories served to shed light on the authors' backgrounds and also their thoughts as to the origins of their contributions. On the whole the stories are extremely good and several of them will stay with you, in the dark recesses of your mind, coming to light now and then. I particularly enjoyed "One Night Stand" by Kevin J. Anderson, a naughty little tale about the relationships of lonely men and women. (I would also suggest you read his book *Resurrection, Inc.* a superb first novel. Kevin Anderson will be a major writer in the not too distant future.) Also quite interesting was Ray Aldridge's "The Flesh-Tinker and the Fashion Goddess," a sad tale on the dangers of placing beauty first and the consequences one must suffer in doing so. "An Hour To Kill" by Arlan Andrews attempts enjoyably to explain spontaneous human combustion.

Doug Beason's "A Reasonable Doubt," written shortly before the *Challenger* mishap, is a very touching story about the space shuttle flight crew and the sacrifices they sometimes must make. Robert Sheckley's tale about "Mind-Slaves of Manitori" shows what the power of the mind can do. The story that touched me most was "Windows" by Kim Antieau, a hauntingly beautiful love story about being wanted—regardless of by whom, or what.

Pulphouse is a superior anthology, offering some of the most outstanding authors in the genre today, with a few dark delights tossed in along the way and this indicates to me that the future of SF will be in darn good hands. It is a well-crafted magazine, and so I strongly urge you to go out and buy a copy and support it. **Pulphouse** and the other small press publications are an important step in newer authors seeing their hard work come to fruition.

BUYING TIME by Joe Haldeman (William Morrow and Company, 1989, 300 pp., \$18.95; ISBN 0-688-07244-5)

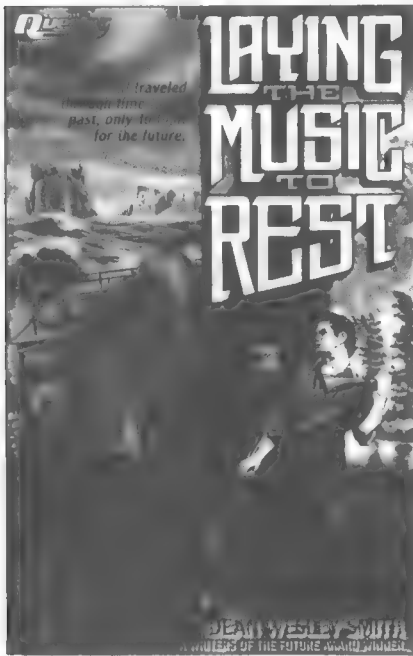
Reviewed by Sharon E. Martin

In this tale of future earth the population is divided between the immortals and the ephemerals. As in any world, those that have (in this case, longevity and wealth) are resented by those who have not. Rejuvenation for those who can afford it, space travel, a planet made small by new methods of travel, and revolution have transformed earth into a place of bodyguards, publicly acknowledged assassins, and anarchy. An immortal has to be careful.

Dallas Barr is one of the oldest men alive, a public figure who has made many fortunes (one for each rebirth). He has just entered a new youth when he is approached by a fellow immortal, enticed by an old lover, and invited to become part of a secret committee, a committee out to change the world even more, by taking it over! Dallas declines the invitation to join. Now it isn't just the "phems" he must watch out for.

Haldeman gives us a good, old-fashioned adventure, never mind that it takes us from earth to space and back again. The writing is immediate, whether told in the voice of Dallas or of Maria, the lover with whom he has been reunited after decades. The setting is marvelously realized, on earth, in space, or en route, and clips of public service scripts add pungency and grit.

Like a good mystery, which this is, one is loathe to lay aside this story once begun. And though I might quibble with the ending, or rather the way the end was achieved, I can still recommend *Buying Time* as a fit companion for a lonely night, or just the thing to spice a lazy afternoon.



LAYING THE MUSIC TO REST by Dean Wesley Smith (Popular Library, 1989, 194pp., \$3.95, ISBN: 0-445-20934-8) Reviewed by Anthony Trull

Dean Wesley Smith is one of those overnight successes who put in about eight years of hard labor to earn that first taste of success. He published lots of stories in odd places, had a story in one of the Hubbard award anthologies, but didn't come to the notice of the larger SF community until he started *Pulphouse* in 1988. Now he has published his first novel and has his first opportunity to succeed before a mass-market. Like most first novels, *Laying The Music To Rest* has strengths and weaknesses. Its strengths are the sort that can carryover and grow from book to book; the weaknesses can be repaired with practice and commitment.

Ex-college professor, Kellogg "Doc" Jones, is marking time as a bartender, growing bored, when two old friends ask him to help rid their mountain lodge of a ghost. Although skeptical, Doc makes the rough journey deep into the Idaho wilderness. It's been ten years since Doc and his friend, Fred, have done anything as crazy as skin-diving into a cold mountain lake, ten years since Doc has done anything crazy at all. He is especially dubious because the lake has formed over a turn-of-the-century mining

town after a mudslide dammed the Monumental Creek, the water is *cold* and they're searching, for God's sake, for something that will satisfy a *ghost*. What they find involves them in a skirmish among time travelers and lands Doc on the *Titanic* hours before it hits the iceberg.

The strengths of the book are its settings: the texture of the Idaho mountain wilderness and history, the detailed, opulent, horror of the *Titanic*, and the story's thorough acquaintance with hands-on pursuits like bartending, mountain travel, and skin-diving. Dean has obviously lived a lot of years with his eyes open and his hands productively busy and it shows to good effect. He creates here a context for his characters that—in its solid familiarity—reminds one of Stephen King. He is not King's equal, but he shows promise.

It's when Dean ventures into the fantastic and leaves the well-observed world of his own experience that he begins relying on stock SF furniture. The haunting of the lake is well-done, but the ghost herself begins materializing at some damned convenient times. One man's telepathic communion with the ghost is a given and neither explained nor explored. Time travel enters the story—and it's okay that there is no explanation because who can explain time travel?—but there is little consideration of its paradoxes and SF readers know that time travel would have paradoxes or there had better be a reason why not—especially when the story is partly driven by warring factions each trying to kill its enemy's ancestors.

The book leaves many unanswered questions. Who were/are the Seeders? What sort of disaster awaits mankind, to survive which the Seeders are seeding pockets of humanity? Why did the people from the future recognize the hero's name? (Apparently, he does things such that his name is remembered among the soldiers of the future. He does okay, but he doesn't do legendary things in the story at hand. We're to fill in the blank imaginatively, or there is a sequel planned (the Seeder Saga?), or the original manuscript was edited inexpertly.)

Yet most of these sorts of problems could be solved if the author would apply as much rigor to the fantastic elements as he habitually does to the everyday world.

The real point of the story is Doc's emotional rebirth and the putting of the dead to rest. This works and that ain't bad for a first novel.



TOURISTS by Lisa Goldstein (Simon & Schuster, 1989, 239 pp., \$17.95, ISBN: 0-671-67531-1)

Reviewed by Pascal J. Thomas

Neither a novelization of the story of the same title, nor a continuation of "Death is Different," from which it borrows the name of Amaz, *Tourists* partakes of the spirit of both, building on the feelings of bewilderment or discovery of Americans abroad by imbuing its locale with magical attributes. Amaz is a quintessential Third World tourist spot, from its beaches covered with luxury hotels to its ruins and its museum, in an old city bearing traces of all the previous colonial invaders. Not forgetting the impenetrable language, the inefficient police and the Communist insurgents lurking in the background!

The protagonists, however, are not tourists; Mitchell, an American university professor has come for a year to the country in order to do some research, and taken his wife and two daughters with him. A strand of the book is the character study of the family, each of whose members has problems of his or her own, from the alcoholic mother to the father who cannot talk to half of his family. Angie and Casey, the daughters, are interesting as a good (but not quite symmetrical) image of the duality between inward and outward looking minds, the former fleeing to a fantasy world, the latter never learning enough about the culture around her.

Amaz, however, is a country of the mind, where the myths studied by Mitchell do have precise roots in reality rather than archetypes, and streets can shift according to who walks them, and with which map or code. To me, the best parts of the book were those set on the "dry river running through the heart of the city," the junk shop neighborhood of Twenty-Fifth November Street. Goldstein recounts their old feuds and their fairy tales (which are the same, of course) and creates a fascinating microcosm.

While this book may not be as ambitious as *The Dream Years*, it seems to me tighter and lighter than *A Mask for the General*. When we follow Casey, understandably the most active protagonist, the novel reads a bit like a young adult adventure book, a slim and zippy work, miles away from the somber implications of the two thematically-related stories. All still seem to say that tourists or not, Westerners can't understand the countries they visit; Amaz is a template for our feelings of frustration or fear at this, and has been filled by the author with surprising or funny details. We'd like to know more, and of course we can't.

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NONFICTION BOOKS OF 1989

Reviewed by Doug Fratz

Histories and Essay Collections

THE WORLD BEYOND THE HILL: SCIENCE FICTION AND THE QUEST FOR TRANSCENDENCE by Alexei & Cory Panshin (Jeremy P. Tarcher, 685 pp., \$29.95; Elephant Books, RD1, Box 168, Riegelsville, PA 18077, signed 1st edition, numbered and autographed, \$52.00) The Panshins have spent more than a decade developing this comprehensive and insightful history and analysis of the early development of SF, and it shows. This is one of the most important works of SF scholarship to date, and should earn the Panshins a Hugo Award this year.

THE ILLUSTRATED HISTORY OF SCIENCE FICTION by Dieter Wuckel & Bruce Cassiday (Ungar, 251 pp., \$?) A history of SF from a German perspective, with many B&W photos, cover reproductions and art.

MODERN FANTASY: THE HUNDRED BEST NOVELS by David Pringle (Peter Bedrick Books, 284 pp., \$8.95) Respected British author/critic Pringle selects 100 best post-WWII fantasy novels. Disagreeing with his choices is half the fun. Recommended.

SCIENCE FICTION & FANTASY BOOK REVIEW ANNUAL 1988, ed. by Robert A. Collins & Robert Latham (Meckler, 486 pp., \$65.00) Annual collection of essays and reviews. This edition covers SF&F of 1987, is copyrighted 1988, and was released in early 1989, with essays by Mark Van Name (on Orson Scott Card, chosen "Author of the Year"), Charles de Lint (on fantasy), Michael Morrison (on horror), Michael Levy (on SF), and Neil Barron (on research and criticism—principally academic). A good record of the field, but with the high price, one aimed only at libraries. (The 1989 volume is supposed to have appeared, but I have yet to see it.)

Reference Books

MORE THAN 100 WOMEN SCIENCE FICTION WRITERS: AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY, ed. by Sharon Yntema (The Crossing Press, Box 207, Freedom, CA 95019, 193 pp., \$?) Bibliographies and short biographies of 100 of the best-known female SF&F authors. Nice library-quality hardcover edition. It appears to be the result of several diligent months in a library—interesting, but it could have been a much more useful reference work.

CONTEMPORARY SCIENCE FICTION, FANTASY AND HORROR POETRY: A RESOURCE GUIDE AND BIOGRAPHICAL DIRECTORY by Scott E. Green (Greenwood Press, 234 pp., \$35.00) An amazingly exhaustive and well-done reference guide to SF&F/horror poets and poetry—a must for fans of SF poetry, despite the price.

DOUBLE YOUR PLEASURE: THE ACE SF DOUBLE by James A. Corrick (Gryphon Books, P.O.B. 209, Brooklyn, NY 11228, 85 pp., \$5.95) A useful tribute to the old Ace Doubles, which first appeared in 1953, had their heyday in the 1960s, and were actually continued into the 1980s prior to their recent reincarnation.

SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY BOOK

REVIEW INDEX, VOL. 17, 1986 by Hal W. Hall (SFBRI, 3608 Meadow Oaks Ln., Bryan, TX 77802, 71 pp., \$?) Mr. Hall continues his dedicated (and largely unheralded) indexing of SF&F book reviews; a hardcover is supposedly available from Borgo Press.

THE NESFA INDEX TO SHORT SF 1987 (New England SF Assn., Box G, MIT Br. P.O., Cambridge, MA 02139, 110 pp., \$13.00) The NESFA crew continues their valuable references to short SF (along with the nonfiction published in the fiction magazines).

Single-Author Volumes

DANCING AT THE EDGE OF THE WORLD by Ursula K. Le Guin (Grove Press, 306 pp., \$19.95) A collection of a decade of essays and reviews by Le Guin, only a few of which deal directly with SF. An interesting window into the mind of one of SF's best authors (although one, I have grown to suspect, whose best work has already been written).

THE STRAITS OF MESSINA by Samuel R. Delany (Serconia Press, P.O.B. 1786, Seattle, WA 98111, 169 pp., \$19.95) The first (and probably last) collection of Delany looking at his own fiction through his critical alter-ego, K. Leslie Steiner; Delany is often impenetrable, but occasionally profound.

PATHLAND TO ELFLAND: THE WRITING OF LORD DUNSANY by Darrell Schweitzer (Owlswick Press, Box 8243, Philadelphia, PA 19101, 180 pp., \$25.00) A comprehensive review of the work of this great early fantasist; few can match Schweitzer's combination of insight and readability.

THE STEPHEN KING COMPANION, ed. by George Beahm (GB Publishing, P.O.B. 7359, Hampton, VA 23666, 363 pp., \$35.00) Absolutely *everything* you might want to know about King and his writing, recordings, and movies, with interviews (both with and about), fan letters, full bibliography, and more, in a beautifully produced hardcover.

THE NULL-A WORLDS OF A. E. VAN VOGT by H. L. Drake (Chris Drumm Books, P.O.B. 445, Polk City, IA 50226, 32 pp., \$2.25); **THE MANY WORLDS OF LARRY NIVEN** (Drumm, 64 pp., \$4.50) Two more valuable but affordable Drumm booklets (#32 & 33). The first contains excerpts from interviews with van Vogt, 1974-85; the second is a comprehensive Niven bibliography.

DIVINE INVASIONS: A LIFE OF PHILIP K. DICK by Lawrence Sutin (Harmony Books, 352 pp., \$25.95); **TO THE HIGH CASTLE - PHILIP K. DICK: A LIFE 1928-1962** by Gregg Rickman (Fragments West/The Valentine Press, 2705 E. 7th St., Long Beach, CA 90804, 451 pp., \$19.95) The rush to chronicle Dick's life continued last year, with these 1½ similarly-titled biographies. The Sutin book is a highly professional-looking biography of Dick's entire life. The Rickman is his 3rd book on PKD, and covers his first 30 years; a 2nd volume will cover 1962-1982. Both recommended for dedicated Dick fans, who can never know too much.

A GUIDE THROUGH THE WORLDS OF ROBERT A. HEINLEIN by J. Lincoln Thorner (Gryphon Books, P.O.B. 209, Brook-

lyn, NY 11228, 48 pp., \$5.95) The next few years will undoubtedly see a flood of books on Heinlein; Thorner has beaten the crowd with a heartfelt, if a bit amateurish, attempt to chronicle the life and fiction of RAH.

Movies

HARLAN ELLISON'S WATCHING by Harlan Ellison (Underwood-Miller, 708 Westover Dr., Lancaster, PA 17601, 514 pp., \$29.95) A compilation of virtually every word that Harlan has written on film/TV, 1965 to date; highly recommended for all film buffs and Ellison fans.

THE TWILIGHT ZONE COMPANION by Marc Scott Zicree (Bantam, 466 pp., \$12.95) A reissue of 1982 guide with plots and data on each episode; unfortunately, this "revised and expanded 30th anniversary edition" does not provide equal coverage for recent episodes, including only an "addendum" on the 1980's movie and TV revivals.

FLIGHTS OF FANCY: THE GREAT FANTASY FILMS by Kenneth Von Gunden (McFarland & Co., Box 611, Jefferson, NC 28640, 295 pp., \$25.95) In-depth looks at 15 movies considered to be "great fantasy films": *Beauty and the Beast*, *Conan the Barbarian*, *The Dark Crystal*, *Dragonslayer*, *The 5000 Fingers of Dr. T*, *It's a Wonderful Life*, *Jason and the Argonauts*, *King Kong*, *Lost Horizon*, *Popeye*, *Superman*, *Thief of Bagdad*, *Time Bandits*, *Topper*, and *The Wizard of Oz*. (Such a motley crew!)

Art Books

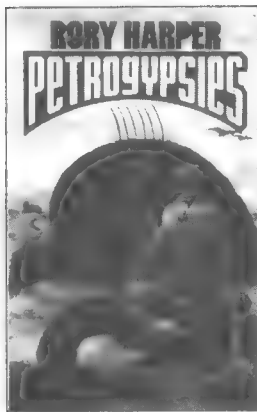
DOVE ISABEAU by Jane Yolen & Dennis Nolan (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 32 pp., \$13.95) A romantic fantasy for a teenage audience with handsome full-color illustrations.

1000 AIRPLANES ON THE ROOF: A SCIENCE FICTION MUSIC-DRAMA by Philip Glass, David Henry Hwang & Jerome Sirlin (Peregrine Smith Books, 63 pp., \$14.95) Possibly the strangest SF book of 1989—full-color photographic collages and text adapted from a stage production that premiered in 1988 which combined music and visuals to tell a story apparently involving the abduction of a New Yorker by aliens.

VIC AND BLOOD: THE CHRONICLES OF A BOY AND HIS DOG by Harlan Ellison and Richard Corben (St. Martin's Press, 66 pp., \$8.95) Excellent full-color graphic story adaptations, by one of comicdom's most celebrated artists, of Ellison's three tales of Vic and his telepathic canine: "A Boy and His Dog," "Eggsucker," and "Run, Spot, Run."

SAMURAI CAT IN THE REAL WORLD by Mark E. Rogers (Tor, 128 pp., \$12.95) The 3rd book of the illustrated adventures of Samurai Cat.

SHERLOCK HOLMES IN LONDON by Charles Viney (Houghton Mifflin, 154 pp., \$24.95) A coffee-table book of old B&W photos of areas and buildings of London featured in the adventures of Sherlock Holmes. For dedicated Holmes fans only. ■



PETROGYPSIES by Rory Harper (Baen Books, 1989, 275pp., \$3.50, ISBN: 0-671-69840-0)
Reviewed by Chuck Von Nordheim

Rory Harper isn't exactly a household name in the science fiction community. In fact, I only recall seeing his byline once in *Asimov's* and once *Aboriginal*. His first novel, *Petrogypsies*, should change that.

Petrogypsies is one of those square pegs that gleefully defies being pigeonholed. I suppose it can best be categorized as an alternate universe story, since it's driving premise is that rigs, cementers, and other mechanical accouterments of oilpatch technology have been replaced by sentient, leviathan bioappliances of possibly alien design. Yet interwoven into this hard science fabric are resonant lectures on the power of music and performance, work ethics, love, and how to live life exuberantly which raises this novel from mere category fiction into art.

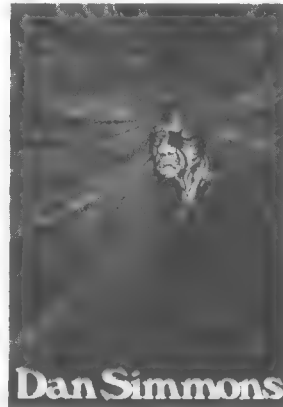
On another level, Harper's book is reminiscent of the best of Heinlein's juvenile novels. The reader follows the central protagonist, Henry Lee, through the passages that lie between late adolescence and young adulthood. Not once through these trials and tribulations is Harper too condescending or saccharin. The writer always hits

exactly the right tone, and time after time, I felt the painful stab of recognition.

Petrogypsies also has a brawling, larger than life quality that reminded me of Larry McMurtry and the field's own Joe R. Lansdale. Yet even when Harper was telling the tallest of his tales, he never lost sight of the humanity of the characters.

Of course, no novel is flawless. The third section of the book drags. And some readers will find Henry Lee's country boy naivete a bit heavy-handed.

Debut work of this caliber deserves your support. Go out and buy a copy of *Petrogypsies* today.



CARRION COMFORT by Dan Simmons (Dark Harvest, 1989, 636pp., \$21.95, ISBN: 5-913165-37-9)
Reviewed by Andrew M. Andrews

How does one review the finest horror novel published in 1989 and what may be the finest novel of the decade?

In *Carrion Comfort* Dan Simmons tries to find the Answer to everything, includes a peek at a quest for the Reason for Horror and the reason for the endless pain and suffering on the planet, and gives us a taut, emotionally charged epic creation as well.

Carrion Comfort, if one were to look at

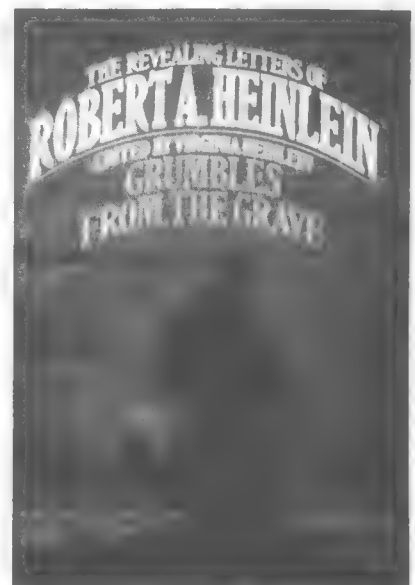
the ingredients, contains elements of *The Most Dangerous Game*; an influence Simmons may possess of a certain film made circa 1978, called "The Driver" starring Ryan O'Neal; and present-day influences, from Stephen King's *The Shining* right through to the latest novel from Tim Sullivan, *The Parasite War*.

In the novel, people either have the Ability or they don't: the Ability to Use or Push. They may be Neutral, and not have it; they may be able to Use or be Used. In short, many of the atrocities perpetrated on others through history, Simmons says, are the result of telepathic mind-control—those with the power, or the Ability, can use others like pawns in a chess game. Like a game of chess, throughout history, those with the Ability have been playing an extremely deadly game, using people like puppets to kill or be killed.

Since his incarceration in a death camp during World War II, Saul Laski has suspected the Oberst—a ruling mind that can control and manipulate many people, perhaps great crowds on a monstrous scale. Others (Sheriff Rob Gentry and Natalie Preston) also caught up in the bizarre, decades-spanning Game, also learn to suspect those with the Ability—Melanie Fuller (who can use to a great degree), and others. They are all searching for Wilhelm Borchert, "Willi," whom Saul suspects is the death camp Oberst, who wants to join an exclusive club that includes the most powerful people in the history of the world, including the most powerful, C. Arnold Barent.

Gentry, Natalie, and Saul are caught up in vicious events on the way to the greatest Game—from a series of deadly events in a Philadelphia suburb called Germantown, to Charleston, to an island off the coast of the Carolinas—where they must encounter and try to destroy not only Melanie, but others—to avenge countless people who have died in their wake.

This novel makes you question the very nature of the world's greatest political events.



GRUMBLES FROM THE GRAVE by Robert A. Heinlein, edited by Virginia Heinlein (Del

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Rey, 1990, 283pp., \$19.95, ISBN: 0-345-36246-2)

Reviewed by Andrew M. Andrews

"... things... built level and square by craftsmen who were honest in their bones."

This is from Robert A. Heinlein's speech, "This I Believe." The whole of **Grumbles From The Grave**—a collection of letters to his agent, Lurton Blassingame; to an editor he despised, Alice Dagliesh (of Scribners'), for "censoring" his work; to fans; and to associates and colleagues in the field—is grounded on that underlying principle.

Heinlein, throughout his career, sought to set the record straight—that he was an honest, forthright craftsman who thought all his intentions and summations were com-

plete and included in every book he wrote. To many people, Heinlein was a pioneer in the area of speculative fiction. Many saw him as a straightforward militarist in a lot of the novels he wrote (**Starship Troopers**, **Puppet Masters**, etc.), an impression he tried, unsuccessfully, to disprove.

Those arguments are here again in **Grumbles**.

It's a silly title for a collection of letters and reminiscence. A lot of correspondence is jumbled and uneven, and many names are left blank (presumably for legal reasons, though why the editor included them in the first place is a mystery), but it is still easy to see what an angry, bitter, and frustrated author Heinlein was.

For example—Heinlein in a letter to John W. Campbell, Jr.:

BRIEFLY NOTED

Reviews by Doug Fratz

Collections

THE ASIMOV CHRONICLES: FIFTY YEARS OF ISAAC ASIMOV, ed. by Martin H. Greenberg (Dark Harvest, P.O.B. 941, Arlington Hgts., IL 60006, 1989, 678 pp., \$21.95; limited edition, \$49.00) A large, handsome volume of 50 Asimov stories, one from each year since 1939, nicely illustrated by Ron Lindahn and Val Lakey Lindahn; a must for Asimov fans, and the first of what promises to be a worthwhile series: a Fritz Leiber volume is promised this summer.

TANGENTS by Greg Bear (Warner, 1989, 290 pp., \$18.95) These nine stories (seven from the past six years, two from the '70s) provide ample evidence that Bear was one of the best SF writers of the '80s.

CRYSTAL EXPRESS by Bruce Sterling (Arkham House, Sauk City, WI 53583, 1989, 264 pp., \$18.95) Sterling's first collection covers 1982-1987, and the year's best single-author collection of short SF. Arkham House is once again to be commended. (The major publishers were out to lunch to let this one go to a small press publisher!)

ESCAPE FROM KATHMANDU by Kim Stanley Robinson (Tor, 1989, 314 pp., \$17.95) For sheer fun, nothing in 1989 beat Stan Robinson's tales of George and Freds and their wild adventures in the Himalayas.

AUTHOR'S CHOICE MONTHLY - ISSUE 1: GEORGE ALEC EFFINGER; ISSUE 2: KARL EDWARD WAGNER; ISSUE 3: LISA GOLDSTEIN (Pulphouse Publishing, Box 1227, Eugene, OR 97440, 1989, 99-116 pp., \$4.95@) Another fine idea from the ambitious and prolific folks at Pulphouse: a monthly series of small anthologies chosen by the author. Effinger chose from his classic SF humor of the early '80s; Wagner included three stories whose ideas came to him in dreams; and, Goldstein picked five of her stunningly well-crafted stories from the '80s (all first printed in *Asimov's*). Cloth and leather editions are also available for collectors, individually or by subscription.

Anthologies

THE BANK STREET BOOK OF SCIENCE FICTION, THE BANK STREET BOOK OF FANTASY, THE BANK STREET BOOK OF MYSTERY, THE BANK STREET BOOK OF CREEPY TALES (Pocket Books, 1989, 184-190 PP., \$3.95@) Four paperback collec-

tions of B&W comic-book adaptations of short stories, apparently aimed at a 8-14-year-old audience. The quality varies, and only a few are of interest for adult readers.

WHAT DID MISS DARRINGTON SEE? AN ANTHOLOGY OF FEMINIST SUPERNATURAL FICTION, ed. by Jessica Amanda Salmonson (The Feminist Press, 1989, 263 pp., \$10.95) A collection of 24 stories of supernatural fantasy by women, including both old (19th century) and more recent work, with an emphasis on lesser-known stories. A valuable collection.

NOVELS/NOVELLAS

APARTHEID, SUPERSTRINGS AND MORDECAI THUBANA by Michael Bishop (Axolotl Press (Pulphouse Publishing), 1989, 95 pp., \$10.00) Dreams and reality converge in Bishop's intense novella, as concepts of modern physics serve as a metaphor of racial relations in contemporary South Africa. It is a *tour de force*, so emotionally intense that the fantasy element is necessary to help distance the reader from the events of the story. Also available in deluxe and limited editions. Must reading; likely award nominee.

SINBAD: THE 13TH VOYAGE by R. A. Lafferty (Broken Mirror Press, Box 473, Cambridge, MA 02238, 1989, 160 pp., \$9.95); **THE ELLIPTICAL GRAVE** by R. A. Lafferty (United Mythologies Press, P.O.B. 390, Stn. A, Weston, ON Canada M9N 3N1, 1989, 101 pp., \$18.00+\$3P&H) These latest books by Lafferty continue his growing small press legacy. *Sinbad* is a nice little volume; true fans will have to endure the inexplicably high price of the latter volume.

PORNUCOPIA by Piers Anthony (Tafford Publishing, P.O.B. 271804, Houston, TX 77277, 1989, 187 pp., \$19.95) This hardcore pornographic comedy (with bizarre cosmological SF concepts crammed into the ending) was obviously written by Anthony early in his career, but unable to be sold, being too pornographic for SF audiences, and too strange for mundane pornographic readers. Anthony played it for laughs, not prurient interest, using an unusually boring and unsympathetic protagonist. Still, there was occasionally something here that makes me wonder whether SF pornography might just be a fertile new sub-genre, some time in the future... (Nah...)■

"... So far as I have observed you, you would no more think of going off half-cocked, with insufficient and unverified data, with respect to a matter of science than you would stroll down Broadway in your underwear. But when it comes to matters outside your specialties you are consistently and brilliantly stupid. You come out with some of the goddamnedest flat-footed opinions with respect to matters which you haven't studied and have had no experience, basing your opinions on casual gossip, newspaper stories, unrelated individual data out of matrix, armchair extrapolation, and plain misinformation—unsuspected because you haven't attempted to verify it."

Again, a letter to Blassingame relating Heinlein's frustration in dealing with H.L. Gold over changes made for *Galaxy Magazine* to the serialization of **The Puppet Masters**:

"... Gold is turning out a good magazine, but as a writer he was never anything but a run-of-the-mill hack. This whole matter no doubt sounds like a tempest in a teapot, particularly as Gold did not change the story line but merely monkeyed with dialog, rephrased sentences and such—in short, edited the style..."

Heinlein writes about his frustrations openly, about his dealings with Scribners' and, later, Putnam's, with first his "young boys" books and, later, his "adult" work, including and up to **Time Enough For Love**.

There are chapters on his trials and tribulations following the release of **Stranger In A Strange Land**, about why the Heinleins became so frustrated trying to deal with fan mail and fans themselves, the Heinleins trips around the world, work around the house, his nonfiction, and NASA and the Apollo Projects. There are also appendices to show the work that was cut to editorial order.

I think a longer, more detailed biography, including more autobiographical information, may be due. But you can feel Heinlein's pervasive spirit still at work here—commanding an army of provocative thinking, keeping us forever on our toes.



THE LAST COIN by James P. Blaylock (Ace Books, 1989, 328pp., \$3.95, ISBN: 0-441-47-75-0)

Reviewed by Steven Sawicki

Authors must dance a delicate ballet when deciding how much information to

include in a novel. Too much and one becomes boring, overwhelming and sometimes preachy. Too little and confusion reigns, driving purists to reference works in hopes of understanding while most just toss the book across the room. Unfortunately, in *The Last Coin*, Blaylock errs on the latter end.

The Last Coin revolves around two central characters: Andrew Vanbergen, a slightly eccentric individual with an answer for everything including his own bizarre behavior and Jules Pennyman, collector of coins—very special coins. The plot moves between Pennyman's quest for these coins (more about them in a second) and Vanbergen's attempts to turn an old colonial house into an inn. In addition, there's weird neighbors, relatives and boarders, numerous portents and signs, lots of cereal, and a veritable Noah's Ark of animals—including a Surinam Toad, opossums, spoon hunting pigs, parrots, carp and cats among others. And then there's the coins: silver pieces of ancient mint, thirty of them. In fact, the coins are the original thirty pieces of silver given to Judas upon his betrayal of Christ.

While Blaylock gives us bits and pieces of information about the coins, their power, the secret society sworn to keep them separated and the individuals (Caretakers) who take on this task, he never provides a clue as to what these coins are or where they originally came from. There's also some question as to who or what Pennyman actually is. The novel's an interesting read if only for the insanity Blaylock invests in his characters. But in the end it's all somewhat for nought.

The coins provide the impetus for action and without a better understanding of them the reader is just along for the ride. A fun ride at times, but also a frustrating one.



THE LONG RUN by Daniel Keys Moran (Bantam Spectra, 1989, 372pp., \$3.95, ISBN: 0-553-28144-5)
Reviewed by Everitt Mickey

The Long Run is Daniel Keys Moran's third book, following *The Armageddon Blues* and *Emerald Eyes*. It is a sequel to *Emerald Eyes*, taking place about a decade later with many of the same characters. The protagonist is one Trent Castanaveras, the son of the main character in *Emerald Eyes*. "Trent the Uncatchable" is a thief. He

"boosts" data. Not unexpectedly, he runs afoul of the establishment. If they catch him, "brain drain" would be the terminal result. The resultant chase encompasses the Earth-Moon system.

Sounds simple enough doesn't it? Throughout the book various subtle and complex ethical considerations raise their ugly heads. For example, at one point Trent is off to risk life and liberty in an attempt to rescue his trusty sidekick, Johnny-Johnny, a co-processor "image" which helps Trent. Its main function is as a data filter, making the mass of data intelligible. Johnny-Johnny was written by Trent and had been progressively refined over the years. Trent's girlfriend protests saying that Johnny-Johnny is "just a program." Trent's rejoinder? "So are you."

Moran weaves a tapestry of delight, using multiple plot lines. His characters are fully three dimensional, (except for Artificial Intelligences).

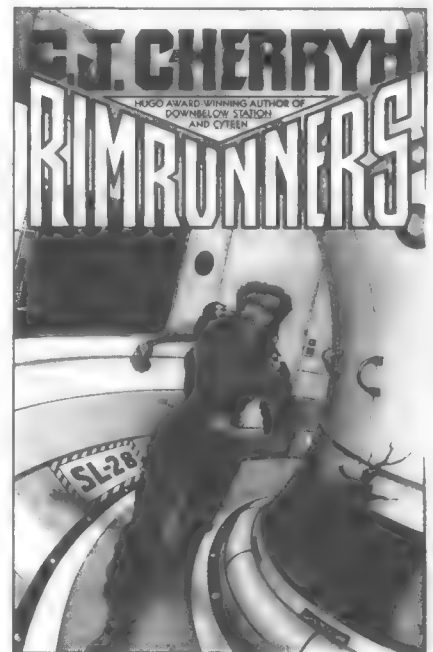
The technology is plausible, and seamlessly incorporated into the character's lifestyles. This is hard science fiction, very hi-tech and masterfully done and unlike much recent science fiction the author paints an encouraging picture of the future. Not necessarily the "we've solved all our problems, peace on Earth" variety, but more the "when life hands you a lemon, make lemonade" version. It's a hopeless struggle, but don't give up, and enjoy life a bit while you're at it.

Of all the works that can be considered part of the cyberpunk genre, this one rates near the top of my list. I am eagerly awaiting the release of more books in the series.

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RIMRUNNERS By C. J. Cherryh (Questar, 1990, 278 pp., \$4.95; ISBN 0-445-20979-8)
Reviewed by Sharon E. Martin

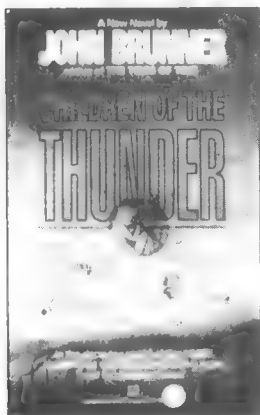
Rimrunners (a 1989 hardcover, now out in paperback) is prime science fiction—inarguable science, fully-realized characters, flawless setting, breathtaking adventure, and Cherryh's stylish prose. And though I know a story can't take the place of real space

experience, this one comes close.

Bet Yeager is stranded on Thule, a space station made obsolete by war and the redistribution of power. Once a marine in the defeated Earth Company fleet, she is a victim of the war. Like the homeless of our day, she does what she must to fend off attack and starvation and to find a place to sleep. And every day she arrives at the Registry to look for a job, any job, so long as it's aboard ship.

Even an Alliance ship. Facing the authorities on Thule, charged with murder and other crimes, Yeager is given a berth on Loki, sprung from jail to serve on a ship of enemies. The Loki is an Alliance spy ship, a ship on which she can die and from which she cannot leave.

Rimrunners is about loyalty and duty, with nothing left out. It is not a book for the squeamish. Despite the violence, I'm glad to have shared Cherryh's adventure. And I can't wait for the next one.



CHILDREN OF THE THUNDER by John Brunner (Del Rey/Ballantine, 1989, 340pp., \$4.50, ISBN: 0-345-31378-X)

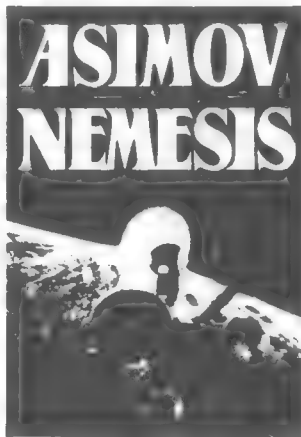
Reviewed by Jeremiah Patrick Reilly

This novel is true to the style and focus of Brunner's works since the late sixties, although darker and less hopeful. If you are a fan of his writings, you will enjoy this novel. The plot is simple: two people, Peter Levine, a science writer, and Claudia Morris, a sociologist, gradually stumble upon a pattern of crime committed by young adolescents with the common thread that the perpetrators go unpunished. The crimes include prostitution, an insurance racket to "protect" small businessmen, designing custom drugs, killing an ex-Marine, and running a sex ring at boarding schools which caters to special tastes including those of the wife of the headmaster. Brunner builds suspense carefully without giving the story away. One suspects but never fully determines the truth until the end.

For me, the denouement was unsettling. One of the children, David Shay, tracks down and collects the other gifted children, but for what purpose? He says, "We are humanity's only hope of salvation." But are they? They claim that they oppose the violence, racism, hatred, and hypocrisy of the world. Yet all of them committed crimes at one time. Their recent collective crime was to kidnap General Thrower, an influential leader in

Britain, and roast him over coals. In fact, they commit the same crimes they claim to oppose in the name of saving the world from itself. The children eventually conduct a trial of Peter Levine for the crimes of hypocrisy and lack of love. Their own actions and crimes are supported on a foundation of hypocrisy.

Brunner is masterful at extrapolating current trends and this book is no exception. The subplot regarding the source of the children's power is thin and not entirely convincing, but otherwise I highly recommend this novel.



NEMESIS by Isaac Asimov (Doubleday, 1989, 364 pp., \$18.95, ISBN: 0-385-24792-3)

Reviewed by Anthony Trull

This is an original novel by Asimov, original in the sense that it takes place in no ongoing future history. In the 23rd Century, Earth teems with eight billion people while one hundred space settlements house tens of thousands each. The Earth and the Settlers have taken up similar positions with respect to one another that Earth and the Spacers had in *The Caves of Steel*; although the Settlers are living on artificial habitats within the Solar System, not in other star systems. Like the Spacers, the Settlers feel vastly superior to Earth.

The settlement of Rotor, following the vision of orderly human society possessed by its leader, Janus Pitt, leaves the Solar System. Rotor is propelled by a secret light-speed drive called hyper-assistance. Everyone assumes that Rotor is heading for Alpha Centauri. Actually, a Rotor space probe has detected Nemesis, a red dwarf neighbor star to Sol, two light-years away, obscured by dust clouds. It is there that Rotor travels.

The novel follows two converging storylines. The first concerns the Rotorian astronomer Eugenia Insigna—discoverer of Nemesis—and her daughter, Marlene. Eugenia is gradually learning that Nemesis is headed for the Solar System, and it will sufficiently disrupt things in five thousand years as to make Earth uninhabitable. Marlene, fifteen, has the disquieting ability to read body language. This makes her wildly more effective than a human polygraph, and it charms few people. Janus Pitt takes the first opportunity to send mother and

daughter to Erythro, the barren planet that orbits Nemesis's dark companion.

The second storyline follows Crile Fisher, Eugenia's Earth-born husband who refused to ride Rotor to the stars. Out of favor now because he failed to learn Rotor's destination, he provides some clues and people on Earth put things together. For a variety of reasons, they decide to build a starship and follow Rotor.

Nemesis is full of characteristic Asimovian touches, such as people who think ahead as many generations as Karpov foresees chess moves, and people who find love in middle-age. Interestingly, Asimov denies the general science fiction assumption of a mixed racial future in space, postulating that if given the opportunity, humanity will self-separate into ethnically homogeneous communities. But his villains are those who seek the isolation of a people to build an orderly, unblemished world. The heroes are those who welcome the embrace of the Other.

Nemesis is more than just a cerebral puzzle, or a simple dialogue between excellent debaters, although extensive theorizing among characters about a situation about which the reader already knows is annoying. But it is also a star-spanning novel in the "great tradition."

A DIRGE FOR SABIS by C. J. Cherryh & Leslie Fish (Baen, 1989, 393 pp. \$3.95)

Reviewed by Steven Sawicki

Subtitled "Book 1 of the Sword of Knowledge," small print underneath that warns the reader that this is a shared world novel originated by C. J. Cherryh. Don't let that scare you off. This is pure Cherryh, through and through.

Dirge is a complex novel of a small group of individuals drawn together as a family by circumstances beyond their control. Set in an age when craftsmen operate only through sponsorship by wealthy individuals, *Dirge* follows Sulun, a natural philosopher, and Omis, a blacksmith, as they toil to develop the bombard—the only weapon capable of protecting their city, Sabis, from the Ancaran hordes.

Unfortunately, time and fate are not on their side. A series of disasters, some magical, beset them and their only choice is to flee. Mix in a miser and his sister, a group of children, a young girl who's survived a harrowing experience, a rival group of religious wizards and a magic system where magicians can only ill-wish or well-wish things, place and individuals, and you've got the formula for some fine adventures.

The plot is standard flee and chase. But Cherryh's ability to bring to life more than a dozen distinct individuals makes the story work. Following closely on Cherryh's *The Paladin*, *Dirge* only reaffirms her ability to weave her characters through a tight plot as if they were doing the driving. Unlike *Angel With A Sword*, which was so obviously merely the setting up of a shared world, *Dirge* is complete in a of itself.

Any novel that leaves you wanting more yet feeling satisfied at the same time is a work of art. I would not be at all surprised if *Dirge* is nominated for a Hugo or a Nebula Award next year.■

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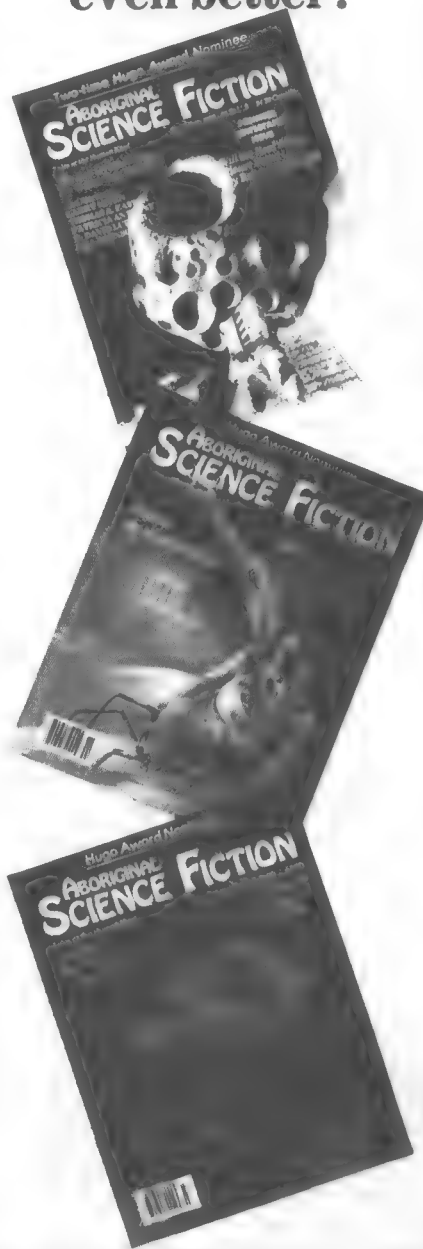
The Dec.-Nov. 1989 issue (on sale in October) is our special blasphemy issue and features Nebula-winner James Morrow with "Bible Stories for Adults No. 31: The Covenant" and humorist Esther Friesner with the "The Doo-wop Never Dies."

The Jan.-Feb. 1990 issue (on sale in December) will kick off a three-part special featuring Frederik Pohl and artist Frank Kelly Freas, who have teamed up for "The Gateway Concordance" — a history of humanity's contact with the Heechee made famous in Pohl's Hugo- and Nebula winning *Gateway* novels. Joining Pohl in the Jan.-Feb. 1990 issue will be Nebula winner George Alec Effinger with "No Prisoners."

"The Gateway Concordance" will continue in the March-April and May-June 1990 issues along, with many other stories by David Brin, Michael Swanwick, Richard Bowker, Bruce Bethke, Jennifer Roberson, and many, many others.

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Send all letters of comment to: Thrust Publications, 8217 Langport Terrace, Gaithersburg, Maryland 20877 USA. Deadline for letters for publication in *QUANTUM* 37 is April 30, 1990.

Patricia Mathews
12899 Central Avenue N.E. #174
Albuquerque, NM 87123

I was glad to see *THRUST* once again. Some information for two of your reviewers might answer the questions they raised:

Mr. Schweitzer's suggestion that someone, somewhere, is deliberately stripping *Star Trek: The Next Generation* of all dramatic values is absolutely correct. Melinda Snodgrass, who has been working on that show, told attendees at Bubonicon in Albuquerque last August that Gene Roddenberry believes that by the 24th Century, human beings will have "outgrown" sin. According to Ms. Snodgrass, the crew of the *Enterprise* is not to be permitted any internal conflicts, even those due to misunderstandings or conflicting interests. Ms. Snodgrass has had enormous trouble with this concept and has tried hard to inject drama and suspense into these plots, but Gene has consistently had the last word on the subject.

Mr. Watson's description of Pennterra's and Red Prophet's "ecomysticism," in which the land offers the hunter's tribe animals to eat, and the same carnivore "can assuage both appetite and conscience" is beautifully precise. According to Joseph Campbell's *The Power of Myth*, this is exactly the way the major hunting cultures think and the ideal they live by. In other words, both Moffett's and Card's anthropology is sound. Both authors soft pedal the identification of the primary animal (i.e. the buffalo on the North American plains) with the primary god; but the animal god, like the god of the Quakers, Mormons, and many other faiths, is a god that sacrifices himself that his people might live.

I think that the kudos given Lois McMaster Bujold for *Falling Free* was like John Wayne's Oscar for *True Grit*: intended not for the work itself but for the entire body of previous work. Since we can't award it for the *Miles Vorkosigan* series, we honor the author by honoring the one single novel we can pin down.

Welcome to Poul Anderson's new column. I agree with his connection between science fiction and beer (best enjoyed together!) but disagree that including Jane Winecooler as well as Joe Sixpack in his dissertation is "smarmy." After all, not only does Jane read science fiction (some even smarmier writers complain that we write—and sell—too much of what we like!) but "Joe Sixpack" presents a very definitely masculine, blue collar image. I like Old Joe; he's good people, but I'm not him and he's not me. So let's hoist a brew (or a California your-horse-is-very-sick mixed drink) to me, Joe, Paul, and every segment of both markets, long may they overlap.

Phyllis Eisenstein
6208 N. Campbell
Chicago, IL 60659

While going through the *THRUST* back

QUANTUM LEAPS



LETTERS

issues we just received, our collective Eisenstein eye was caught by your column in the Summer 1986 issue (*THRUST* 24), "A Look at the John W. Campbell Award." Three and a half years too late, I find myself moved to point out that you left me off Table 3. I am a Campbell Award non-nominee with more than one Hugo or Nebula or Hugo nomination who entered the field since 1971. I've been nominated for the Nebula twice (1975 and 1982) and the Hugo twice (1982 and 1983), not winning, alas, any of them. It makes me wonder who else got accidentally left out of your calculations, and what sources you were using for same.

I hope I haven't uncovered a hidden vein of misogyny in *THRUST*...

By the way, you may already know this by now, but George R.R. Martin was only eligible for the Campbell Award in 1973 (not in 1974); his first story, "The Hero," appeared in the February 1971 *Galaxy*.

[Unfortunately, last summer I cleaned out my files and threw away my original research for the Campbell article, so I can't pin down an explanation for missing you in my analysis. My award-information source was Franson and DeVore, 1985 edition, which clearly lists that your short story, "Attachment" made the final Nebula ballot in 1975, and your novella, "In the Western Tradition" was nominated for a Nebula in 1981 (not 1982), as well as your Hugo nominations for "In the Western Tradition" in 1982, and your novelette "Nightlife" in 1983. So I can only assume that I must have had incorrect data regarding the date of your first published story. My sources for that data were all of the various and sundry reference volumes on my shelf; I remember spending many hours going through them seeking dates of first publication for authors like yourself. Reaching over and pulling down Curtis Smith's *Twentieth Century Science Fiction Writers*, which I believe

was one of the references I used, I quickly find an accurate bibliography for you, with first publication in 1971. *Mea culpa, mea culpa.*

Rereading my article, and the reader responses in subsequent issues, it strikes me how many quandaries I noted that remain unexplained. Anyone want to go back and see if they can search out some more answers?

Phyllis's note above about misogyny, by the way, is an ironic reference to my speculation in my article that the fact that so many non-Campbell-nominees who went on to win fiction awards were female might be due to same. - DDF]

Richard Gilliam
1278 Belleair Road
Clearwater, FL 34616

The name change is a good one. *THRUST* always sounded like a better name for a porno mag. *QUANTUM* is more direct and should help your circulation. Your regular readership will stay with you and potential readers will be less confused by the new title.

I never did understand why John W. Campbell changed *Astounding* to *Analog*. It didn't seem to make much difference in the editorial content, which is the real reason the magazine is now entering a seventh decade.

But even so, *Astounding/Analog* can't match Hugh B. Cave or Jack Williamson, who are starting their eighth decade (six full and two partial) of professional writing. Cave's professional debut predates Williamson's by a couple of years or so, somewhere around 1925. Williamson, as I recall, had his first story published in 1928. There are probably several other pulp era writers who were published in the 20's and are living in retirement (Frank Belknap Long and Theodore Roscoe come to mind), but I can't think of any others still actively publishing.

Cave may have the most varied career extant. Consistently prolific, he appeared in all the major pulps and most of the obscure ones. Name almost any pulp in any genre and Cave appeared in it. He made a successful mid-career shift into the slicks. He was among *The Saturday Evening Post's* most frequent contributors, possibly appearing more times than any other author. His *The Cross and the Drum*, based on his experiences in Haiti, was a primary selection of the Book-of-the-Month Club. Later he returned to the SF/Fantasy genre after Karl Wagner located him via a piece Cave had written for *Good Housekeeping*. In 1977 Wagner's Carcosa imprint collected Cave's best genre stories in *Murgunstrumm*, which brought Cave a World Fantasy Award.

Williamson's career, while more that of a traditional SF writer, is no less noteworthy. Williamson appeared in all of the major SF pulps, including *Amazing*, *Astounding*, *Weird Tales*, *Unknown*, and *Strange Tales*. When the paperback boom occurred in the '50s and '60s, many of his pulp serials were reprinted, introducing Williamson to a new generation of readers, as did his collaborations with Frederick Pohl. Most fans are probably unaware Williamson received his Ph.D. from the University of Colorado in 1964. His dissertation was on H. G. Wells. Williamson taught English at various univer-

sities, including the University of New Mexico.

Even Cave and Williamson occasionally changed their names, using pseudonyms for various reasons. Whether the bylines read Justin Case or Will Stewart, the stories had the consistent quality necessary to transcend an astounding eight decades of professional publication.

The change of name to QUANTUM notwithstanding, I look forward to a third decade of THRUST-like criticism.

David Petit
P.O. Box 626
Morehead, KY 40351

I've been reading *THRUST* since its inception, but have never taken the time to write and let you know how much I enjoy it. I've never taken an active role in science fiction fandom, being content to keep up with the field by reading the various magazines covering it. With the exception of *Science Fiction Review*, your magazine is the only one that I made it a point never to miss over the past decade. When *SFR* discontinued publishing, that left only *THRUST* to provide the type of coverage I was looking for. *Locus* and some of the others are very nice, but a little too, shall I say, bland to suit me. I still buy them when I have a chance, but I don't look forward to reading them as I do with *THRUST*. I understand that Geis is reviving his magazine. If so, that's the best news I've heard in a while.

I'm not surprised that *THRUST* has never won a Hugo. *Locus* provides the kind of reading most people want. Unless you change the entire focus of your publication, *THRUST* is never going to win a Hugo. I know you would like to—and I think you deserve to—but that's the way it goes.

I'm not overly thrilled by your plans for a new title—I think *THRUST* is a great title—but if it helps to sell a few more copies, then I hope it works.

I'm ashamed to admit that I never heard of Martin Caidin before reading Thomas Hackney's excellent interview with him. I'll make it a point to seek out his books.

While I have not seen (and don't plan to see) most of the films and TV programs that Darrell Schweitzer discussed, his views are always more than welcome to me. I disagree with his overall positive assessment of *Batman*, but at least he didn't gush on about it like Ellison did in his *F&SF* review. It was just another in a long line of films Hollywood churns out every summer to appeal to teenagers. It wasn't a bad movie, but it wasn't particularly good either.

Avedon Carol's letter concerning abortion made an excellent point. If a fetus is indeed a person, then whether or not a woman is raped or a victim of incest is beside the point. Abortion would still be murder, so I don't understand how the pro-lifers can make any exceptions to their beliefs. How can anyone rationalize that one fetus deserves to live and another doesn't, if both are human beings? And allowing states to decide the legality of abortion is absurd. It makes no sense to have what is considered murder in one state to be perfectly allowable in another.

Finally, I notice that Ted White is still listed as a Contributing Editor. I hope he

returns soon to the pages of *THRUST*.

[It isn't Dick Geis who's starting up *SFR* again, but rather his former columnist Elton Elliott and a group of others who apparently, from what Dick tells me, and judging from the ads I've seen, have amazingly ambitious plans for the magazine's revival. I look forward to seeing it myself. As for Ted, he's been rather wrapped up in his new role as husband and father, and has been letting his columnist duties slide. I too hope I can get Ted back in these pages soon! - DDF]

Dan Knight
United Mythologies Press
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Regarding Avedon Carol's letter in *THRUST* 35: "Near human being"? What the heck is a "near human being"? The way I always figured it you either are or you're not. Is this some new twist on the old "a little bit pregnant" routine? And so what if a little person needs an incubator to continue their development. My friend needs to be hooked up to a dialysis machine to continue in hers. What's the problem *there*? Technology?

Mr. Fratz, why are you printing this hysterical diatribe? Yes, hysterical. This person described anti-choice types (or pro-life; ah, the joys of linguistic imperiousness) as dangerous terrorists who blow up their fellow citizens and make flippant and compassionless remarks to people in pregnancy-related life crisis like "give the kid up for adoption like it was a surplus ear of corn." A little less drama, there, if you please.

I am a people, and I am a people who suspects this line of reasoning. If A. Carol wishes to see me as a "near human" or non-person caricature that is A. Carol's right. I, however, reserve *my* right to view the matter otherwise. And do so.

Lee Smith
2330 Locust, Apt. A
Long Beach, CA 90806-3069

I hope Charles Platt isn't miffed that by his fifth paragraph I'd guessed—or at least, suspected—what novel he was talking about in his column in *THRUST* 34. Actually, it wasn't all that hard, simply because there've been so few stories about space piracy since Doc Smith and Edmond Hamilton first strip-mined that sub-genre in the 1930s and 1940s. Of course, the first candidate to pop out was Jack Vance's *Vandals of the Void* (circa 1950 and perhaps the first SF story to have a black character in it). But after a moment's reflection I remembered better—and thought on. So blossomed memories of Greene's *Dig Allen Space Explorer* series. But even though I'd read only half of them I reread those two sentences and felt safe in being sure they weren't the answer either. So by default the only thing left was that serial Jenkins (Leinster) wrote for *Astounding* back in the late 1950's.

Alas, methinks Platt has not researched his subject, or at least his subject's reputation, sufficiently. While Leinster may not have made the second ranks in his day (equivalent to Anderson, Silverberg, etc.) he always rated solidly in the third ranks (along

with Williamson, Hamilton, etc.). In the main, his heyday was really in the 1930s and 1940s. While he appeared into the 1950s his writing career was clearly winding down. And *Astounding* was gone by the 1960s, so he couldn't have written there then anyway. In some aspects it might seem true he was a middling writer—the mid-1950s promote this view; while he cranked out such sub-Perry-Rhodan drivel as *Space Tug* and *Space Platform*, he also produced such nifty stuff as *Operation Outer Space*. Yet on the whole he proved rather superior mostly.

Further, it can really be amazing how well his old stuff stands up—and I mean *old*. Consider Baird Searles' review in *Asimov's* recently. This covered a new Leinster novel he praised highly—found it stood up very well. Turns out it was first serialized back in 1921-1922! And he produced at least two "classics": "A Logic Named Joe" and "First Contact," the latter actually filmed, such as it was. Indeed, Sam Moskowitz designated Leinster as one of the top-20 SF writers of the bronze, iron, golden, and silver ages of science fiction, one of the fundamental creators in its development.

In a sense, Platt is right about *The Pirates of Ersatz*, though not in the way he thinks. *Ersatz* was designed and developed as a refuting/updating of old space-pirate extravaganzas Smith and Hamilton had churned out back in the '30s and '40s. As a side effort it pointed out how inane/unsound and/or outdated many of the old ideas and concepts in the Lensman and Captain Future universes were. But in the main it's intent was to show how space piracy would operate realistically, given the technological advances and growth of knowledge in the then-past 20-odd years. To put it more succinctly, *Ersatz* was meant as a satire of satires somewhat in the DeCamp vein. That is, while admitting some of the flaws in the originals, and conceding the satire was right in so faulting these, it showed that, largely, the satire in its exaggeration and ignorance was even more wrong and sillier than the original sources, usually by a long shot.

In parting, I can't resist confessing my bafflement at Platt's claim that Campbell, Boucher, Gold, and Browne made writers write *too* well. Especially since, just four paragraphs prior, he was praising Campbell and Gold for insisting on original ideas, rigorous plausibility, scientific sense, and stylistic competence from that era's writers. Since progress builds level on level, if those advances in the 1950s hadn't been made, then those of succeeding decades would have been at least one step behind, up to today. To suggest, as Platt does, that back then story-telling advancement should have been forsaken sounds to me terribly counterproductive. Had he had his way, and the field had just stood still all this time—why, then, today we'd probably just be struggling up to Leinster's level as we speak.

Besides, Platt's lack of perspective is very damaging here. If only he'd realized his tastes—and experience—weren't typical two paragraphs earlier. Standard readers of some SF-type pulps might well have been generally ignorant of scientific reality. But then these weren't true SF-zines, rather action-adventure pulps with scientific trappings. With *Astounding* and its close imitators, though, the situation proved rather different. Since the 1930s *Astounding* had

built up a readership largely of engineering types who did know all the basic distinctions of the standard sciences. And on the whole they tended to possess a rationalistic outlook toward life, and vigorously favored such in their entertainment. Even Jack Chalker fits that mold, doesn't he?

Now there's something meaty—the Scortia interview. If only all interviews could be as packed, to the point, and absorbing. It reads like an article, in fact. Elliot's been doing this about a dozen years now, almost as long as Walker and Schweitzer. So perhaps it's not so surprising, coming from someone with such a feather in his cap as the *Playboy* Fidel Castro interview.

For the most part I didn't feel too shocked with what I read about Hollywood, though it was sure informative. To listen to him disparage other agents of his past proved depressing, if enlightening. But I sure found myself stunned to hear such remarks about Lurton Blassingame. My gosh, he was agent for Heinlein, Niven, Pournelle, Barnes, and countless others. I've always heard him spoken of most highly. Gee, if even *he* was so lousy, I wonder about all the other lesser agents out there today. Are there really any agents out there worthwhile? And am I badly mistaken, or do I read between Scortia's words correctly that he was still composing on a typewriter up to his death in the mid-1980s?

Card sure comes off as another eco-nut, even if he is rather crafty and subtle about it. That's surely the impression he generates when he drags up the hoary issue of the Dutch Elm tree experiment. Card's criticism doesn't actually condemn science for doing anything wrong, but rather for how he misperceives the working of the scientific method. Not being able to understand this, he unconsciously fears it. Hence his senseless attack on progress as advanced by scientists, which it is, no matter in what *seemingly* objective terms he may couch it.

Accusing scientists of collective arrogance and disdain for public safety is infantile. They are the most considerate guardians of the human race's welfare we have. Some might be guilty of errors of judgment, and overall the profession does need a little guidance and oversight, but on the whole they are more knowledgeable and efficient at promoting betterment of our lot than everyone else, especially the general public. And, without question, the Proxmire types.

And Card just doesn't know when to quit making a fool of himself, does he? "Don't these technomaniacs realize that America's love affair with sci-tech is over?" This environmentalist jazz has greatly distorted his perception of reality to believe the vast majority of Americans have swallowed all the ecologist's garbage as fully as he has.

America's faith in immutable scientific progress remains unshaken and boundless. Most of the "environmentalism" that surfaced during the 1960s (like the metaphysical movement) was simply a detour on the road to progress, riding along on all the real advances that era spawned. While it has partly survived and mutated (resulting in the "New Age" bilge) its fraudulence has long since been exposed and forsaken. Except for fanatics and people like Card.

So if scientists don't straighten up and fly right, why, then, all scientific experimentation is going to be banned completely, eh,

Mr. Card? Medieval forces will rise up, seize control, and turn back the clock a thousand years. A veritable dark age looms.

Card completely misses (as did Shirley) the point about the space shuttle plutonium. Just because "alternate" power sources might become reality doesn't mean they'll be as cheap, or even adequate. As for the safety of plutonium, it's all a matter of degree. Certainly we should (and have) wait until we can ship out plutonium reasonably safely before we do so. And "reasonably safely" always means there is some chance of risk. But to suggest that we wait to ship plutonium out on space shuttles until we can do so with absolute safety is absurd. We would *never* be able to in that case. That sounds like some nincompoops after the *Challenger* accident declaring we'd better wait until we made sure that couldn't happen again before we ever sent anybody back up.

Actually, though, I receive the impression Card wrote his letter just so he could slip in his backhanded pitch for women's slavery.

As for Nazi concentration camps, refugees were released in rapid succession from such places as they were liberated by [Allied] forces. Flooded with millions to clothes and feed all at once, there was no possible way to posit such a choice as Card frames it. The situation never bordered the scenario he envisions: whether to wait a while and care for those freed before moving on or going forward to liberate the rest and leaving those already freed hungry and destitute. It all descended suddenly, en masse, while the great Allied war juggernauts were barreling in on Berlin full steam.

Besides, abortion clinics aren't concentration camps, but rather waystations as in antebellum days. Helping a pregnant woman to have an abortion is like helping a slave escape on the underground railway. Anti-choice people who blockade abortion clinics and such facilities are the equivalent of fugitive-slave hunters. Pro-choice people who run the hate-mongering gauntlets created by the enemy are benefactors of the human race.

Card fears that if anti-choice people don't get their way, be granted control over women's bodies, then they'll turn violent! As if they haven't already swept the country with terrorist waves of abortion-clinic bombings, much like they did with civil rights offices in past decades. Similarly, India saw massive riots and resulting chaos a quarter-century ago when Hindu fanatics demanded the national government enact a ban on killing and eating cattle.

But then, says Card, pro-choice people don't understand what anti-choice people believe. Anti-choice people believe that a glob of protoplasm is really a human being, he insists. I suppose I can understand that. After all, millions of people in India believe that cattle are reincarnated sacred ancestors, and that to eat a cow is to eat somebody's forefather. Just a few centuries ago the anti-choice people's forbears believed that sour milk and like calamities were instigated by folks using witchcraft! Evil types among the community would cast *spells* to cause all the good Christians such dreadful misfortunes. So naturally the only thing to do was burn the perpetrators at the stake.

We Also Heard From:

Nicola Griffith, who reads and writes SF,

and wishes to inform Charles Sheffield, in response to his lament that he has "never run across another person from Hull who reads science fiction," that up until six weeks before her letter, she lived in Hull, England;

Grant Carrington, who disagrees with my use of *i.e.* in my review of *Orbital Decay*.

Jim Butler, who says, "Discovering *THRUST* has been one of the major delights of my mid-life return to SF!"

STAFF NEWS

Darrell Schweitzer's new novel, *The White Isle*, is out from Weird Tales Library. His recent short stories include "Malevendra's Pool" in *Marion Zimmer Bradley's Fantasy Magazine*, "King Yvorian's Wager" in *Weird Tales* 295, and "The Man Who Found the Heart of the Forest" in *Pulphouse* 5. He will also have stories in *Pulphouse* 6 and Tom Montleone's Avon anthology, *Borderlands*. Fans of his *Tom O'Bedlam* series will want to read *Weirdbook* 25. His next nonfiction book will probably be *Discovering Classic Horror Fiction* from Starmont.

Charles Sheffield has a new hardcover novel, *Summertime*, Book One of the Heritage Universe, out from Del Rey in February. Book Two, *Divergence*, is completed and will be out early in 1991. The books have also been sold in England. He is starting to write *Zardalu*, Book Three in the series. A novelette, "A Braver Thing," appeared in the February *Asimov's*, and a short story, "The Double Spiral Staircase," was in the January *Analog*. "Godspeed" and "Health Care System" have been sold to *Analog* and *Asimov's*, respectively. Charles is working on a hard SF novel, *Cold As Ice*.

Michael Bishop's *And Strange At Ecban the Trees* is out as half of a Tor Double with *The Color Of Neanderthal Eyes* by James Tiptree, Jr. Michael is working on a mainstream novel, and he has committed to do a story for a Robert Silverberg/Bryon Preiss Visual Publications, Inc. anthology about dinosaurs. He will be the December 1990 author for Pulphouse Publications' *Author's Choice Monthly*, and he is the subject of an interview in the debut issue of *Science Fiction Review*.

Richard E. Geis, will be writing a column, "Alien Thoughts," for the revived *Science Fiction Review*, and will serve as editorial advisor to the magazine. The first issue contains his short story, "On Borrowed Time," and an interview by Geis with himself. He will continue his column in *QUANTUM* as well.

George Alec Effinger is the October 1989 author for Pulphouse Publications' *Author's Choice Monthly* series, which has released his collection, *The Good Old Stuff*. His new novella, *Look Away*, came out in February from Axolotl Press. George also has short stories in *Pulphouse* 5 and *Pulphouse* 6.

Frank Elley wrote the script for an instructional video, *Play Chess II*, which has just been released. He writes a column for *Chess Life*, a magazine he edited for several years.

Anthony Trull was named Home Office Employee of the Year by Old Heritage Advertising and was awarded a week in Hawaii in February.■

Etchemendy (cont. from page 17)

were fifteen or so, and you went to a party, and you drank so much that you can't remember anything until four in the morning when you woke up on the lawn, lying in a pool of something that smelled like rotten moonshine? Remember how much time passed before you could stand to look at a bottle of whatever it was again—Schlitz, Red Lady 21, Southern Comfort? Well, that's how I feel about speculative fiction right now. Lately, I haven't been able to stand the sight of anything that even vaguely resembles it. That's all right. I know I'll spring back eventually. Meanwhile, I'm filling some of the gaps in my education. Last time I went to the bookstore, I came home with stuff by Raymond Carver, Eudora Welty, Tobias Wolff, and many other writers I had previously considered too covered with kooties to read. Thanks to my new perspective, it's a very enjoyable change.

I don't mean to say that all the books published last year were trash. I read enough terrific novels to make the decision about what to add to the ballot very difficult. There was plenty of great stuff to choose from—if you had the time and patience to pan through a ton or two of detritus for that ounce of gold.

I do see some solutions to the problems I've discussed, but they aren't quick fixes by any means. The unfairness of the Nebula rules seems secondary. Even in its present state, the Nebula process is very good at selecting works that are not trash. In the entire twenty-two year history of the award, not a single piece of trash has won a Nebula. In fact, not a single piece of trash has ever made the final ballot. (I hear a number of literary absolutists reviling that statement. They're sure they've found the only true Way and the Light, and the Nebulas are an insult to the God of Letters. All I can say is, they haven't read enough.) My own belief is that the best way to rectify the Nebula bias toward mass-market publications is to allow an annually elected jury of a dozen or so active SFWA members to make the award. I suspect it will be a hot day on Mars when this approach is actually instituted, however. SFWA members are a hands-on group with very little confidence in representative democracy.

In the meantime, the Nebula Award fulfills a function which is vital if we are to rid ourselves of pervasive mediocrity in speculative fiction. It helps to educate readers about the difference between that which is garbage and that which is not. The ultimate power lies not with the writers, not with the editors, not with the bookstore chains, and not even with the business school wizards. It lies in the hands of readers. What if they published only trash, and nobody bought it? I'll tell you one thing. Corporate America would have to think again. ■

Anderson (cont. from pg. 14)

me, "There's your hero!" Immediately everything clicked together for **A Midsummer Tempest** (1974).

Science itself is an infinite lode. A journal article which I might easily have skipped but didn't happen to, about the curious sex life of a certain class of flies,

brought on "The Sharing of Flesh." (1968) Usually origins are more complicated. For instance, there's nothing wrong *per se* with role-playing games or the Society for Creative Anachronism—Karen and I have been active in the latter ourselves—but we've seen a few persons get involved to an unhealthy degree, even as a few do in SF fandom or anything else. Reading about the enigmatic surface of Saturn's moon Iapetus led me to speculate about its nature, just when J. Peter Vajk made a brilliant proposal for using solar sail craft on long space voyages. Again, everything came together. Having read "The Saturn Game," (1981) Dr. Vajk told me he was pleased to see a spaceship named after him. My reply was, "I only steal from the best

sources."

Apropos which, the astronomer Frank Drake has lately described an absolutely mind-boggling way to find extrasolar planets and study them, though they lie at the far end of the galaxy.

There are many more stories behind the stories, but some I have already told elsewhere, and this piece is getting too long as is. Suffice it to say that that little man isn't only in Schenectady, he's everywhere, and I wish more of my colleagues would listen to him instead of copying each other. Some do listen, of course, and it would be interesting to hear how he has given them their crazy ideas.

In fact, that's an idea for a book.... ■

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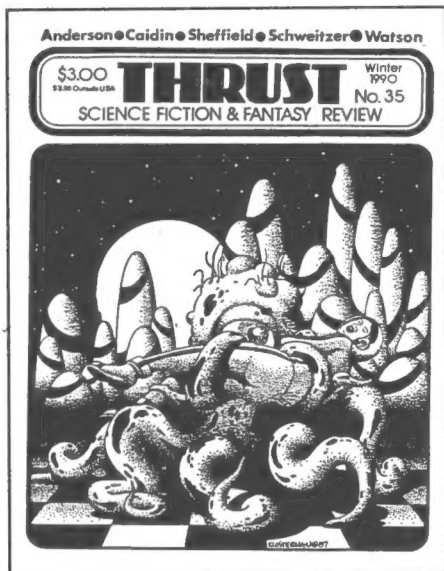
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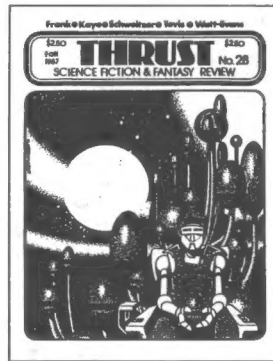
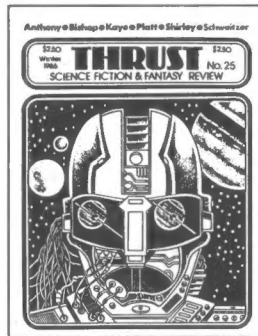
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